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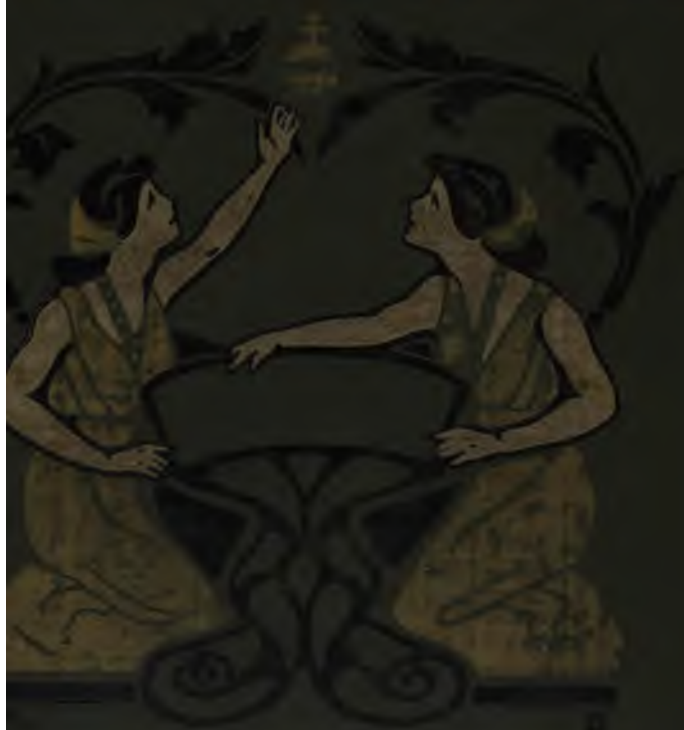
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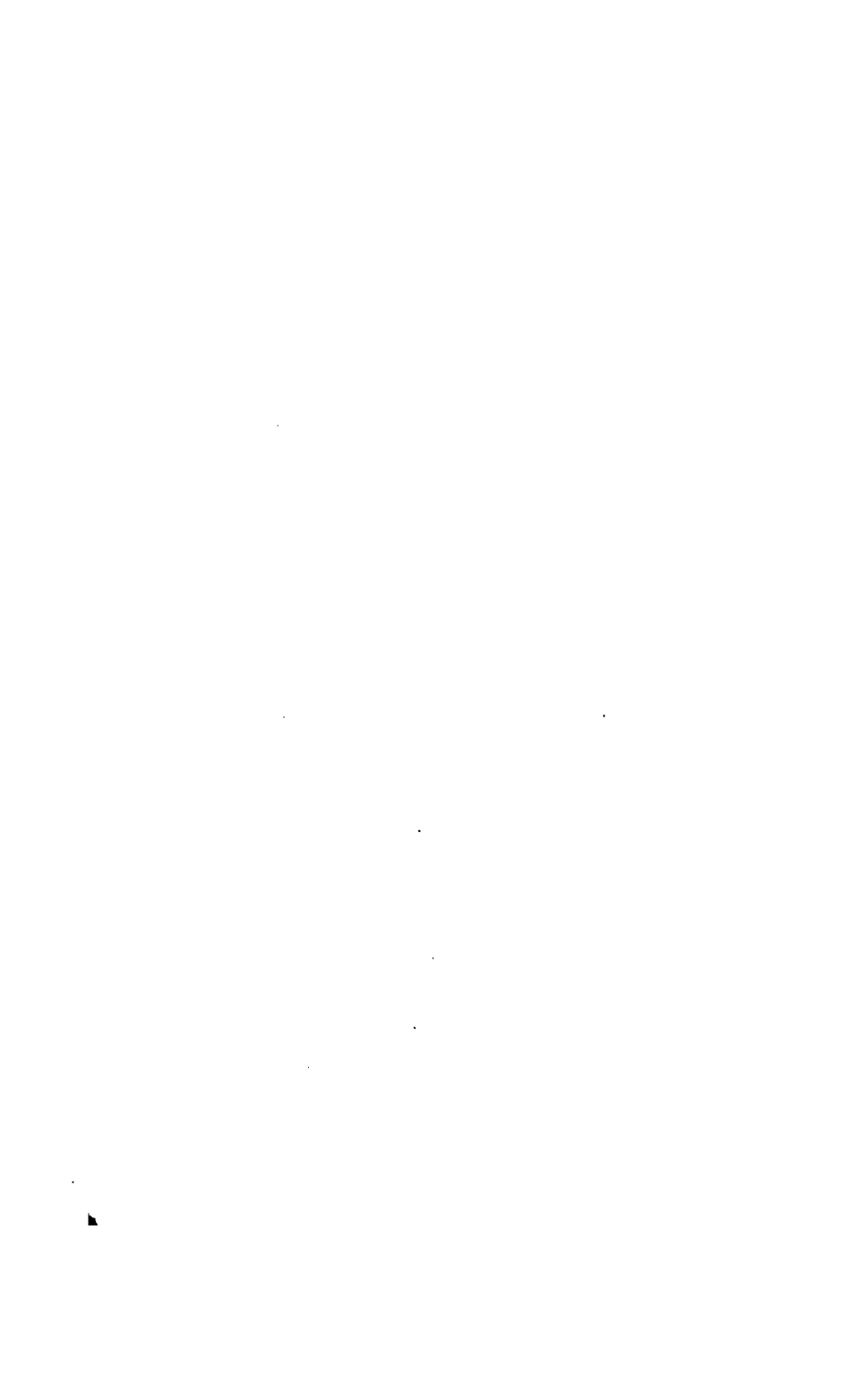
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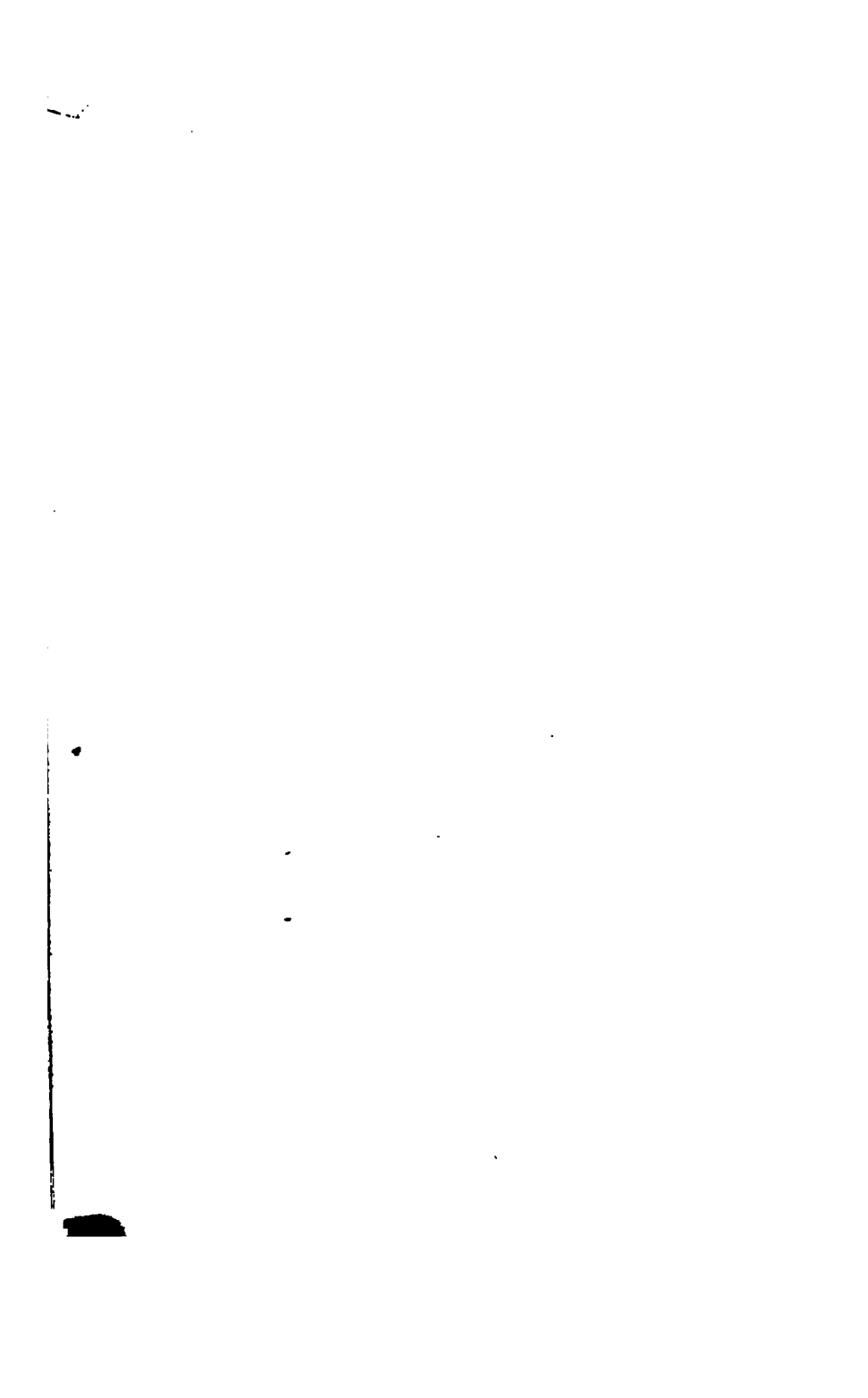
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THE BAUBLE

A NOVEL

BY

RICHARD BARRY

Author of "Port Arthur," "The Events Man," etc.

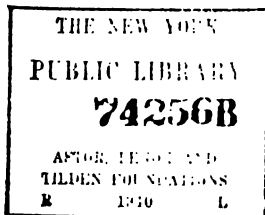
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TO MY GRANDMOTHER
ABIGAIL HAYES

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THE BAUBLE

CHAPTER I

THE ENTERING WEDGE

CONSTANCE was putting fresh clothes on the baby when the blare of a band floated through the open window. The baby threw up his chubby fists and cooed. Then she hastily finished his toilet and carried him to the front room, where, secure in a window-seat and protected by the draperies, she held him close to her breast, while, together, they looked down.

They were several floors above even the neighboring housetops, and it made her dizzy to look into the street so infinitely far below her. Arthur, her husband, had insisted that they take an apartment near the top of the building. She had always feared fire when she went above the second or third floor, but he had insisted that the light and air far up were essential for the baby, although expensive.

For the baby's sake she had finally given in

and accepted the twelfth floor apartment. For the baby's sake she had been obliged to conquer much; first of all her delight in frequent company, then much of the delight and pride she had always taken in her personal appearance; finally, even her fears.

The twelfth floor was very pleasant, after one got up there. It was light and cool and airy, free of dust and insects; and she came to enjoy it, but she had never learned to look out without a quick sinking of the heart. Now, much as she would like to see the band that was playing away so cheerily far down there in the street, she found herself quivering with apprehension.

So, taking a firm grip on the baby, who was crying for a peek at the show, she held him out on the ledge of the window, while she half closed her eyes and tried to forget that she was up in the air twice as high as the top of the water-tower in her native town.

"Mamma! Mamma! Look! Look!" cried the child.

She gave one hurried look out, then sank back into the window-seat with a gasp and clasped him more tightly to her breast, whence he struggled for escape and strove to crawl back onto the ledge.

"Kitty!" she called and the nurse came from an inner room. "Here, hold Robert and let him see the parade. I have some work to do."



She relinquished the child. "Be very careful!" she admonished, and, with a sigh of relief, went into her bedroom.

But she could not stay there. She finally conquered her dislike of having the nurse know she was afraid to look out of the window and kept a close watch on them through the doorway, while she pretended to busy herself.

Meanwhile the air reverberated with the noises of the street, of which, ordinarily, none were sufficient to penetrate to those upper regions. But now, through the gay plunges of the music, she distinguished mingled sounds of cheering and of laughter. It must be the clowns in a circus parade, she thought. A circus parade! She had not seen one in years. It was early for a circus to be in town; still, if there was one, she thought she would take Robert and the nurse some afternoon to see it. She waited for the screech of the calliope (a not unpleasant sound) to note the end of the parade, but it did not come. Instead, there was a long pause, with more laughing and cheering, with loud calls which she could not distinguish, and, finally, another band.

She went out to the window and stood beside the nurse, and watched Robert clapping his hands at the sight below. "What is it?" she asked.

"The suffragettes," said the nurse, who was leaning out perilously and deeply absorbed.

"Oh!" exclaimed Constance, with a sigh of disappointment. "I thought it was the circus."

"It is a circus!" giggled the girl.

"You mean they have some clowns dressed like women?"

"No. They're all women—regular suffragettes—thousands and thousands and thousands of them. They're as far as you can see up the street and just as far down."

"And are the bands women?"

"I should say not. Do you think *women* could play like that? Why, it's regular music. Hear that new one—'Billy'!" The nurse began humming to herself, in time with the distant band:

*"And when I walk I always walk with Billy
Because Billy walks so well;
And when I talk I always talk with Billy
Because Billy talks so swell!"*

Constance was strongly tempted to look out of the window, but she remembered poignantly the nausea that always smote her when she looked down from a height, and refrained.

Presently the nurse called out: "Oh, there's a banner so big they had to get men to carry it! The other banners had women under 'em."

“What does it say?” asked Constance.

The nurse did not answer immediately. She was striving to read the inscription. At length she spoke. “Something about mothers,” she said. Constance was very near the window now. She could look out and see the tops of the buildings across the street. They were six stories high, Arthur had told her. That was half-way down to the street. She felt no dizziness. She wondered if she might not be able to look only as much farther and still be safe.

“I’ve got it now!” the nurse cried. “It says—

“‘As mothers who bring children into the world we demand the right to prepare the world for children to live in!’”

Little Robert cooed and clapped his hands, and another band struck up just as the far-distant one was lost to sound. The nurse quickly changed her tune and sang, in accompaniment:

*“All alone! All alone! Nobody’s here but me!
Come up to see me, dearie; I’m all alone and
cheery;
Come up and have some tea!”*

Constance was looking out of the window. Her fear had disappeared, magically. She forgot that she had never leaned from that window before, and now, though she grasped the ledge very firmly and planted her feet carefully, she was looking down as easily as she might have looked from the second floor.

Up the avenue, as far as she could see, extended the platoons of women in white, with broad yellow ribbons across their bosoms. On the nearest ribbons she managed to read, "Votes For Women." The great banner the nurse had made out was now a block and a half away, but she could still plainly decipher the word "*Mothers.*" It seemed to call out to her, individually, across that canyon of stone and cement. A man was laboring along under it, and two men, behind him, were carrying long yellow ropes that steadied it. Behind these were a group of men, walking.

These men seemed rather forlorn in that broad avenue of amazonian white, but they trudged along valiantly together, and, as they passed, shouts of derision greeted them from the sidewalk. Once she saw a tin can shied at them, and it made her wince. Soon they were lost in the river of white petticoats that rolled on before and behind them.

At length a third and last band passed be-

low, its horns and flutes silent, its drum rat-a-tat-ing. Then swirled an eddy of boys, and close behind flowed a congested stream of carriages, motors, and trucks, the traffic of the street that had been interrupted.

Now the nausea came over her suddenly. She felt herself falling out of the window. It was as though some superhuman force were dragging her through that window, after that strange parade. With a desperate wrench she pulled herself in and sank, almost with a sob, to the nearest chair.

The nurse, looking at her, saw how pale she was, placed Robert quickly on the floor, and hastened to her side.

"Mrs. Rudd," she exclaimed, "you're not well!"

"I'll be all right in a minute, Kitty," gasped Constance. "Those high windows don't agree with me. Get me my camphor bottle, please."

Kitty hastened back with the stimulant, and tenderly placed a pillow behind Constance's head. "There!" she exclaimed; "I always said those suffragettes never did anybody any good. 'Suffer-n-gets' I call 'em. Now, aren't they the perfect ninnies to go paradin' like that? They might a lot better be home gettin' dinner or lookin' after their children. It's a holy show they make of themselves, an' no pay for it. Now, a woman has some call to go ridin' in a



parade, bareback or anythin' like that, but I can't see nothin' to this suffragette thing but a lot of fool women who can't land either a man or a job. Sufferers, are they! Why, a woman has enough to suffer with, anyway, without walking down the street behind a man band, in a boil-in' sun for it."

Constance had now recovered. At first she smiled as Kitty rattled on, but finally she became more serious. "They looked like intelligent women, Kitty," she remarked.

"Intelligent!" sniffed Kitty.

Constance smiled. "Yes," she said, "they looked to me like women who knew what they were about."

"Looked to me as if their strong point was in keepin' tabs on other people," replied Kitty, now busy with the baby.

There was a silence, during which Constance slowly regained her color. At length Kitty said, with due deference:

"Mrs. Rudd."

"Yes, Kitty."

"I didn't notice no women like you down there in that parade."

"No, Kitty?"

"I should say not."

"Why not, do you suppose?"

There was a smoldering blaze in Kitty's eyes. "Do you think a woman with a grand home like

this, and a grand baby like Bobby, and a man like Mr. Rudd, a real man, to look after you-all would be sizzlin' herself out in nonsense like that!" She snorted to herself. "Not much!" she added, handing Robert his rubber ball which had fallen to the floor.

Constance merely regarded the baby with a new interest. It often seemed to her that every time she looked at him was the first. The caressing pride she had in him, the sense of ownership, the radiating joy of motherhood always seemed to bubble up in her, with an overwelling force, as if for the first time. Never did she cease marveling that this child was hers, her very own, more utterly hers than anything else on earth. When he went out for his afternoon ride with Kitty she bade him good-by with reluctant hesitancy, and she permitted him to go only because she knew that within an hour he would be back and that she would then find him as if for the first time, and that then that wonderful radiating joy would possess her again, as it had that first day when she had smiled out of darkness into the face of the physician and had glanced down into the hollow of her arm, where lay her first-born.

She had loved Arthur, she thought, with a love that could never be equaled by any other feeling. That had absorbed her life for a time. It had filled her with a completion of ecstasy

which she had not supposed could ever be replaced or surpassed.

And when she had known that the baby was coming she had regarded the advent with some misgivings, not a few jealous twinges. She had even resented the fact that a little stranger should come—perhaps—between them.

Only dimly, now, could she remember that jealous uncertainty of those anxious months. How ridiculous that had been! Of course she could love Arthur as she always had, and still love the baby.

Constantly she told herself that she did not love the baby more than she loved Arthur. No. That was not true. However, it was certainly a different love.

“Mrs. Rudd.”

Kitty was speaking to her. She looked up languidly, aware now that she was very tired.

“Yes,” she said.

“I didn’t notice any nurse-girls in that parade.”

“No?”

“Not a one.”

“Really?” said Constance, more in a mechanical desire to be polite, for she always tried to be careful of her servants’ feelings, than because her thought was on the problem of the parade. She was absorbed in dwelling on the various crises of the short year and a half that

had passed since the baby's birth, and in recalling to herself how each had but added to that mother-love which now consumed her.

"Of course not," exclaimed Kitty.

"Strange!" said Constance.

"Not at all. At least I don't think so."

"Why?"

"Because every nurse-girl that has a job is too busy at it, and every girl without a job is too busy looking for one."

"Yes," assented Constance, not really hearing what was said, but only watching Robert as he vainly strove to swallow his rubber ball, while with two fists he was doing his best to demolish the train of cars that had come to him at Christmas.

Meanwhile the afternoon had passed rapidly and finally she realized that it was dark, for Kitty was turning on the lights. With a twinge of conscience she started to go to her room to dress for dinner, when suddenly she found that Robert had at length solved the problem of swallowing the ball. It had indeed disappeared in his mouth. She rushed to him, in alarm.

At that moment a key turned in the lock of the outer door, and a man entered. He found Constance extricating the ball with thumb and finger, and the baby howling with vexation at the loss of an excellent meal of hollow rubber.

"Why, Connie, you're not dressed for din-

ner!" he exclaimed, paying no attention to the baby. "The Werthers and Bolstons will be here any minute. You told me this morning you had asked them to dine with us to-night."

Still coddling the child, who was slowly becoming reconciled to his loss, she answered thoughtlessly: "Oh, I'll have time to dress. You wouldn't have Robert choke, would you?"

"What do you pay a nurse-girl for?" he answered sharply, and, without another look at either wife or child, passed into his bedroom, where he promptly began his preparations for dinner.

She clasped the child, almost angrily, to her breast. He had now ceased crying and was happy in the opportunity he saw to chew the frill on the collar of her dressing-gown.

"Connie!" came harshly from the other room.

"Yes, Arthur!"

"Give that kid to Kitty and get ready for dinner."

She did not answer. She merely walked over to the window and looked out into the street where now the arc lights were striving against the night. The baby snuggled closely against her breast and gave up his designs on the frill. For a long time she stood there, looking abstractedly into the night, over that bewildering wilderness of city roofs. She watched the great

light of the tower swing ponderously as it announced the hour. She saw the myriad twinkles of incandescence that shone out more and more numerous against the jagged vault.

At length the baby slept, one chubby hand nestled in her throat, the other still clasping the frill. She kissed the down of his head.

Then her husband stood before her, in the conventional stiffness of starched shirt-front, glistening watch-fob, and carefully pressed evening clothes.

“Where’s Kitty?” he demanded.

Without a reply, save a whispered “Pardon me,” she turned to seek the nurse. As she passed from the room she realized, for the first time in her life, that her child was more important to her than her husband.

CHAPTER II

THE WEDGE AT WORK

OF course Constance was not ready when the guests arrived. So Arthur had to receive them. First came Fred Bolston and his mother. Fred and Arthur were in the same office. Before he was married Arthur had often spent the night at Fred's home, which his mother kept for him. Then there came Jack Werther and his wife. Jack belonged to the same club with Fred and Arthur. He had been married six years and at his home, also, Arthur had been often welcome before he had one of his own.

Thus it was a group of old friends, chatting together, who waited long for the appearance of the mistress of the house. Arthur had made some quick apologies for her absence as they appeared, and then things proceeded as if she were an unimportant detail.

From her bedroom Constance could hear the laughter and talk, and there was some note of aloofness in it that caused her to linger over her dressing. She had no desire to go out

there to-night. Who were these people, anyway, that she should bother about them? Friends of Arthur's, only. She had known none of them before she was married. She doubted if she would have chosen any of them for friends were it not for Arthur.

Mrs. Werther had no children and though she always made a fuss over Robert, Constance often suspected there was more self-satisfaction than sorrow in her expressed envy. Her conversation never soared above clothes, bridge, theaters (musical comedy at that) and books (always light novels).

As for Mrs. Bolston, Constance had never been able to understand why she did not like her, for she was undoubtedly a true, fine, motherly old soul, whose only concern was her boy's comfort and whose single pride was in her boy's success. And she had accepted Constance with the same motherly indulgence, but, beyond that, there was nothing between them. Constance often wondered if her secret antagonism for Mrs. Bolston did not have its birth in the very evident belief of the elder woman that her son was a much more remarkable and important individual than Constance's husband.

From time to time as she dressed, Constance glanced lovingly at the cradle where Robert reposed in chubby and red oblivion. As she

concluded her toilet by fastening the pendant which had been her wedding present from Arthur's parents she went to the cradle, gave the baby a final tuck and a final kiss, and then turned to the drawing room.

With a sly and somewhat melancholy instinct she paused in the doorway to see if her advent was expected. Not at all. The two women and the three men seemed to be having a jolly time without her. In her present mood she was convinced that they would have enjoyed themselves more if she did not enter. She conquered an impulse to go back, slip on a comfortable robe and spend the evening happily beside the cradle. Thus, choking back her feelings, she grasped the curtains more tightly.

"Mrs. Rudd!" It was Jack Werther who saw her first, and he sprang forward to greet her, but she observed that Arthur took no notice of her, and kept on exhibiting his new humor.

Also she felt that a certain cordiality which had been between the two women departed as she entered. She attributed it to the fact that they did not like her, never pausing in her mood of unhappiness to wonder if their attitude were not the reflection of her own coolness.

She passed quickly on to the dining room, saw that everything was ready, and told the

butler to announce the meal. Fred Bolston took her out to dinner, and when she noted that Arthur, with Mrs. Werther, was gay, animated and attentive, the bitterness of her solitude smote her again. How curt he had been with her when he came home! How she longed now for the party to be finished that she might be alone with her baby!

As the meal progressed she wondered, more than ever, how she lived this life of the big city so long without open revolt. The first year of her married life she had not found it necessary to have friends and acquaintances, for Arthur was sufficient. Then came the baby and he had filled her horizon, but now, as she sat there, listening to the talk about her and taking but little part in it, a chasm seemed to open under her feet.

For she realized that she was not really a part of this life. The guests were her husband's friends, not hers. None of them required her; she was in the way. In the intimate life of her own home none of them could or would take any interest, and Arthur, by the thoroughness with which he was entering the frivolous spirit of the occasion, was showing conclusively that his heart was no longer with her and the child.

She looked back three years to the little town where Arthur had met her, where her existence

had been filled with simple friends and simple gayeties, now all gone. That had been erased from her life as completely as the East River breeze erased the smoke from her horizon every morning. At the thought of coming to New York she had been elated, uplifted. And the coming had been *almost* a fulfillment of her dreams. But the novelty and the thrill of that first year could not last forever. It was inevitable that eventually she must settle down and find that life was an everyday event, after all, even in the great city.

The impossibility of making friends here, the routine that drove her into her little apartment as she had seen animals driven into their iron cages at the zoo, the complexity of the life that had confined her thoughts and feelings more and more to herself until her love of simple friends had been utterly denied and all but forgotten;—all this was weighing upon her heavily and she was fast falling into one of her morbid fits when something was said that seemed to strike into her sufferings like a ray of light.

“They certainly are getting a taste of real life!” The exclamation was made by Fred Bolston in reply to some remark from Mrs. Werther.

“Well, I do admire them for having the nerve to go through with it, even if it is an

absurd thing they are working for!" said the frivolous Kate Werther.

"Nerve!" said Arthur. "Why, they babied themselves through!"

"Babied? How do you mean?" meekly inquired Mrs. Bolston.

Arthur tossed his head in the contemptuous way he had, and answered, "They pretend to show what they can do in a public march, like men make. And their fizzle proves they are not equal even to a parade in public."

"You would have thought it was some parade if you had seen it, Arthur," laughed Jack Werther.

"Didn't have to see. Look at the line of march. Central Park, south, to Union Square. Less than half the regular distance. Even the Grand Army veterans, every one of them over sixty, march from Grant's Tomb to Washington Square. Women have no business at that stuff, any more than they have voting."

Constance felt the blood rushing to her face. Somehow it seemed to her that her husband had insulted her. He had not kissed her when he came in; he had not even looked at the baby; he had not greeted her when she entered the drawing room before dinner; he had not so much as looked at her until now; and, while his remark did not seem directed at her, and per-

haps none of the others would have thought so, yet she took a morbid pleasure in believing that somehow he was speaking to her, for she well knew that he objected to her being late for dinner when they had guests. What connection there was between the suffrage parade and her being late to dinner she did not attempt to explain to herself, but that there was a connection she felt sure. At that instant her sympathy went out to those women she had seen so valiantly marching up the avenue that afternoon.

"Do you agree with me, Kate?" concluded Arthur to his companion.

"I'm afraid I do," answered Mrs. Werther, laughing.

Now, Constance *knew* this woman was a flirt. Only the minute before she had been expressing her admiration for the suffragists; now she had completely changed her mind and was siding with Arthur Rudd. She was a frivolous blonde, anyway, and Constance, a brunette, had never been able to see why Arthur liked her, although he had always contended it was the husband and not the wife of whom he was fond.

"Certainly a woman who has a happy home can have no reason for going into the streets like that," Bolston said.

His mother nodded complete approval of her

son's profound remark. "Eh, mother?" he called across the table to her.

"By all means, Fred," she answered, with dignified certainty as if there was no reply to be made. Surely her son's opinion on any matter of public or of private policy was absolute and final.

"If women voted to-morrow, mother, for whom would you vote?" Fred asked, with a twinkle in his eye.

"I wouldn't vote," she answered.

"Ah, but you would have to. I would take you over to the polls myself. Do you think I'd give the Democrats a bulge like that?"

"Then," said the little old lady, sweetly, "I'd do exactly as you wished, Fred."

Arthur looked around the table, smiling. "I guess most families in the United States would be just about like that," he said, "it would only double the vote—that's all. No particular difference, one way or the other."

Now there was a mischievous look in Kate Werther's face. She looked over at Constance and said: "I should think you would be for woman suffrage, Mrs. Rudd."

"Why?" asked Constance, without smiling.

"Because the first thing the women will do when they vote, you know, will be to make things so fathers will not be able to control their children any more."

"What! What's that?" asked Constance, looking instinctively to Fred Bolston for elucidation.

"Yes," chattered on Mrs. Werther, "You know now a woman has no right to her child. Arthur could take Bobby and sell him, if he wished, and you couldn't do a thing to prevent it."

Constance smiled broadly, but there was a queer little twist in her heart. She looked at her husband, almost pitifully. He saw the look and answered quickly; "Never fear, Connie, the price on that kid is exactly ten million bucks, and it will never go down."

"But is—that—true? Could you—could—you—?"

"I guess I'd have a hard time if I tried actually to pull off the deal."

Now Mrs. Werther became quiet and firm. "But it's gospel truth," she insisted, "I saw it in one of the pamphlets they send out. The law makes a child the property of the father, and that's the reason all these women are trying to vote. They want to get the children back to themselves."

None of them knew quite what reply to make to this, and Mrs. Werther was delighted to note that Constance was even more sobered than before. There was a pause before Constance exclaimed:

"If that's true I—I—" she hesitated, then blurted out, "Why, I guess I'm for woman suffrage myself."

Fred and Jack clapped their hands, Kate smiled broadly and Mrs. Bolston looked around the table in alarm, not quite sure that the party was still peaceful; her gaze finally rested inquiringly on Arthur, who had been looking at his wife with quizzical inspection. For a minute or so all looked from husband to wife.

Then a smile broke on Arthur's face. "Well, Constance," he exclaimed, "If women's voting will make that kid any more yours than it is now, for Heaven's sake then let them vote."

And he turned to Mrs. Werther, answering a question she had asked him some time before about a new musical farce. Presently the coffee arrived and the women rose. As Constance led the way into their drawing room she could not fail to observe that Mrs. Bolston hung behind and plucked the sleeve of her son who was busily lighting his cigar.

"O Fred!" she whispered.

"Yes, mother," he answered and Constance noted the patronage in his manner, the condescending note in his voice.

"Is that true?" she asked him, with a suggestion of yearning apprehension.

"What?"

"That women have no lawful right to their children?"

"Shucks! Nonsense!"

She still hesitated, then said, haltingly, "I know it wouldn't effect us, but I just wondered—about—"

"Forget it!" he almost shouted, laughing, and pushed her, gently, into the drawing room.

At last the guests were gone. Constance rushed to the bedroom and knelt hastily by the cradle. Robert was sleeping exactly as she had left him, one chubby hand clasping the counterpane, the other doubled under his chin. She kissed the down of his head, so tenderly the poised cradle was not disturbed. Then she rose and unfastened her waist. As she crossed the room she found her husband in her path, his coat removed, his arms hanging at his sides.

"When do I get my kiss?" he asked, his face quite sober.

She lowered her eyes and passed on to her dressing table. She fumbled at her waist, hoping he would come to unhook it for her, as he usually did. Instead he began undressing and paid no further attention to her.

After much reaching, and straining, and the tearing of the gown in one place, she managed to unhook herself without assistance. Then she turned and there he was facing her again.

"When do I get my kiss?" he demanded. He should have seen that in her present mood she was in no humor for teasing, but he did not. He followed her about the room, demanding a kiss.

"Sssh!" she whispered, at length, "You'll wake the baby!"

He turned on his heel, with a smothered oath.

"Now I know you care more for that kid than you do for me!" he exclaimed.

She got ready for bed and waited for Arthur to come. He had left the room. She waited several minutes. He did not come. She went into the library and found him curled up on a lounge, covered with a rug.

"Come to bed. I'm waiting," she said.

"Kiss me, then," he replied, sitting up.

Now all of her long smothered neglect surged up in her. "I will not," she muttered.

"Then I'll not impose myself upon you," he replied, calmly, settling himself more comfortably.

She stood over him, highly indignant. Never in the two years and a half of their married life had they slept in separate rooms, except for the few short weeks when Robert came. She looked down on him where he had closed his eyes in pretended slumber.

"Arthur Rudd," she exclaimed, all of the wrongs she had treasured up sweeping over her

until she felt herself in a tragic isolation, "You are like every other man. Every illusion I had about you is gone. You are just a plain, ordinary, brute man."

He opened his eyes, with a sarcastic smile. "Oh! You've found me out at last—eh?" he grunted and snuggled into his blanket more firmly.

She towered above him, now thoroughly enraged. "Yes!" she exclaimed and rushed on heedlessly, pouring out all her bottled wrath, "I have deceived myself about you long enough. Not until you began to flirt with that outrageous feather-headed Kate Werther was I willing to believe you are like all the others. Right under my very eyes you carried on with her so everyone could see it. You ignored and outraged me beyond belief. You've ignored and neglected and abused your own child—!"

"Abused?" said Arthur, opening his eyes.

"Yes—abused—shamefully, atrociously. You didn't kiss him when you came in to-night. You didn't kiss him when you got ready for bed. You didn't kiss me when you came in. You haven't kissed me yet, and then, like the lordly, self-important, stupid, conceited person you are you stand up and demand—*demand* that I kiss you!"

She halted, out of breath. Arthur sat up and

looked at her, partly in alarm, partly in curious interest.

"Yes!" she continued, her voice rising, "But the scales have fallen from my eyes at last. I understand now what it was those women were marching for in the street this afternoon. It is men like you who have driven them there—men like Fred Bolston, who ignores and patronizes that old mother who indulges and idolizes him. I admire those women. They have the spunk to get out and show the world they will no longer be treated with such shameful contumely—worse than servants—patronized, neglected, abused!"

"Abused!" said Arthur. He clung to the word, as might a lawyer to the only strength in a weak cross-examination.

"Aye! Abused! Do you think physical violence is the only abuse there is? Such neglect, such selfishness as you show, and, *such flirting with other women*, is worse than physical abuse. And now I see why you dare to do it. You think the laws protect you. You think you can do with me as you please—toss me a crumb of affection now and then, as you like. Abuse! Why, I'd rather have you beat me!"

"Abuse!" muttered Arthur, scowling at her.

Suddenly her face lit up with a diabolic inspiration. Ah, if he had only taken her in his

arms, but he did not, and so she launched on him the final curse. As she thought of it later it had been smoldering in her all through the evening, and now it leapt out inevitably, simply. She did not understand that she uttered it only in a vain desire to anger him, to get from him some show of feeling such as was consuming her. She only knew that he had no patience with those suffragists, and so, in utter desperation, she cried:

"I'll leave this house. I'll no longer stay where I'm worse than a servant. I'll learn if there is not some justice somewhere. I'll become a suffragist. I'll go out into the world and *earn* what you so magnificently *give* me. I'll not take another thing from a man like you!"

She fled to her room. The baby had wakened and was crying. She clasped him in her arms and wept. As she wept the baby quieted, and as the baby became more quiet, she became more quiet. She laid him down and crawled into her bed—their bed, Arthur's bed. She sobbed there quietly on the pillow for a long time.

An hour passed and he did not come. Suddenly she sat bolt upright. She had always been afraid to sleep alone. Why did not Arthur come? She longed for his arms, for his kisses. What had she said to him? Now that her anger was cooled she had forgotten. She

waited another half hour. Still he did not come.

Ah! Yes, she remembered, he had wanted to kiss her and she would not let him. After all, perhaps he did deserve a kiss. Slowly she got up, thrust her feet in her slippers and stole toward the library. Yes, there he was lying as she had left him. Poor boy, it must be dreadfully uncomfortable on that hard lounge with that rough rug.

She passed to the lounge and slipped down to her knees by his side. "Arthur!" she whispered, placed her arm across him and kissed him, softly, on the forehead.

He woke with a start and pushed her roughly from him. "Abuse!" he muttered, and fell back to the lounge.

Stunned, desperately unhappy she stumbled back to her room. She turned on the light and looked at her swollen face, where the tears were not yet dry. She rubbed her handkerchief across her face and as she did so she observed a long red spot on her neck. She examined it.

Yes. It was the mark of his wrist where he had pushed her away. Pushed? No. He had struck her. Yes. Undoubtedly he had struck her. At the time she had been so hurt otherwise that she had not felt it.

But there was unmistakably the red welt of a blow.

She turned out the light, fearing to awake Robert, and wearily went to bed, her two hands clasping her neck over the red welt.

For hours she lay there sobbing. Occasionally from her would come a single word: "Brute!"

CHAPTER III

THE LOG SPLITS

MANY of the great wars of history could have been averted by a little timely diplomacy. A thoughtful word here and there, a few ruffled feelings smoothed, some tactless exclamations explained in the light of sober second thought and much of the spilled blood could have been saved.

Napoleon might not have warred on Germany had an ambassador greeted him with the proper respect. The Spanish-American war might not have occurred had General Woodford been given three weeks more in which to secure explanations and promises. America and Japan were nearer than the public will ever know to unloosing their armadas merely because a few hoodlums in San Francisco did not know how to behave. As Elihu Root remarked at the Hague Peace Conference: "War to-day is brought about not by a desire for territorial aggrandizement, but by ungentlemanly behavior, by rash words, and by asper-

sions made without the proper consideration for national dignity."

If, then, nations fly at each other's throats, spill vast quantities of wasted blood, expend uselessly untold treasure, destroy the pleasant arts of peace, and, in a few months, tear down the slow years upbuilding, let us not marvel that one little obscure American home could be broken up by a series of minor catastrophes, no one of which was important enough in itself to merit more than a casual breach.

There was, perhaps, much before that day in the life of the Rudds which might have led to more or less misunderstanding, to not a little unhappiness. However, it was the combination of events, beginning with the woman suffrage parade of one afternoon and extending through the following morning, that makes inevitable a just and careful relation of the present history.

Dawn found Constance wide awake, as she had been all night long, her pillow wet with tears. As the light struggled through the curtains she rose and tiptoed to the baby's cradle. He was sound asleep.

Then she tiptoed to the library. Her face hardened and she looked, sullen eyed, at her husband. He lay there, as she had left him, huddled up in the rug, his head on a sofa cushion, and—snoring. She was disgusted. All de-

sire to weep left her. She turned and again sought her bed and lay there, thinking what she should do.

She had no intention of sleeping. In fact, she thought she never would sleep again. The realization that something had happened to change her love for Arthur seemed a physical incubus. It was as if a dull weight were lying on her chest, and she was numb all over. Somehow, for the first time since the baby came, she was not conscious of his presence there in the room beside her. She could think only of Arthur and what he had meant to her, and how he meant that no more. It was like the consciousness of an amputated arm; the member was gone, peradventure, and she experienced a pleasant pain in lying there and *feeling* it and *using* it just the same.

She remembered how he had first come to her home, brought by her father, with whom he was transacting some business; how he had been, from the first, different from all the men she had ever known; how she had concealed from him, for a long, long time, that she cared at all; how he had almost given up in despair before she would admit that she cared; how she had been obliged finally to tell him that she loved him—stupid boy! he never could see anything until he was actually told.

But it had been sweet, very sweet, wonder-

fully sweet, to feel that he was all hers, that that magnificent strength of his, that steady way he had of just *plowing* through things, of forcing anything he wanted to come to him, was all for her alone. Had he not told her so? Had he not even proved that it was all hers?

Yet, with a twinge of sullenness, she reflected how often she had been obliged to temper his strength with gentleness. Had he not offended her sweet mother with his brusque way? Even her father had said to her, two days before they were married; "That boy of yours is a good boy, but he's a regular wild colt; hold a firm rein on him, or he'll break the harness!"

What prophetic words! Her thoughtful, kind-hearted, gentle father! If she could only now run to him with this trouble! She would not need to tell him; he would know without telling, and would place her head on his shoulder, and talk about something else, and, gradually, thus, they would see a way out together; not that he would tell, but she would just *feel* it; he was so true, so wise!

Then she suddenly grew wide awake when she realized that it *actually was no more*; that love which made her and Arthur one was gone! O wife unskilled in marriage, why should that love go thus, for nothing, in a flash, as it were of vapor, with no vital reason for the change?

Simple and complete was her answer. It had

gone. There could be no doubt of that. For, *had he ever before failed to seek her, and drawing her head down on his shoulder—how gently he did that, with all his roughness—tell her he was sorry, that he had not meant to hurt her and that he loved her still!*

Surely love was gone! Yet, though it was gone, beyond recall, as she felt sure, she lay there, waiting for his footstep, longing desperately in the gray light for his arms to steal around her. How happily she would have forgiven him everything! How often before had they been thus easily reconciled!

She was breathing more freely, now. The weight was not so terribly depressing. She even turned her pillow over so the wet spot, where she had cried, would be underneath. Then she snuggled her head more firmly into it, so she could think more clearly, and wait for breakfast time. Of course she would not sleep.

The next thing of which she was conscious was the splash of the baby in the bath. She woke with a start, looked wildly about and jumped from her bed. She must have slept for hours. She rushed to the bathroom. Yes, there Kitty was preparing Robert for the day. The baby, who had always been her first concern, she now passed with barely a nod, and rushed into the library.

Arthur was gone!

The rug was lying in a crumpled heap, the sofa cushion punched into a wad under the head of the lounge. She even noted the contracted impression of his body which had been left in the soft leather. Bah! He had not moved! He had not tossed as she had for hours, but had slept there like a log, all night, while she sobbed her soul away in the next room!

It was all over.

Yet, from that moment on, her ears were keen for the telephone. Twice before, he had left hurriedly, without kissing her, but each time he had telephoned her as soon as he reached the office. She rang for the butler.

"When did Mr. Rudd leave?" she asked when he entered.

"About half an hour ago, Madam."

Ah, then, he would 'phone in a few minutes. It took him usually about half an hour to reach his office. Reassured, confident in a way she could not explain, and refusing now to remember her unhappiness of the night, she passed into her bedroom and proceeded to dress, looking in from time to time on the nurse and Bobby who were having a splendid hour in the bathroom.

She dressed very leisurely. At each movement that came from any of the other rooms she started. Once the doorbell rang and she rushed instinctively to the telephone, and paused only when her hand was on the receiver, which she

relinquished with a sigh as she heard the butler speak to someone at the rear door.

Half an hour passed and she went out to breakfast, regretfully. She dreaded to leave the little hand extension of the 'phone that was on the tabouret in her bedroom where Arthur had had it installed so he could talk to her from the office while she lay in bed those weak days after the baby came.

An hour passed, and then that numb, heavy feeling of the night came back over her again. The nurse who brought Robert to her as she finished her breakfast, noticed it.

"You are pale, Mrs. Rudd. Aren't you feeling well?"

"It's nothing, Kitty. I didn't sleep very well last night. That's all."

"Shall I fix Bobby for a run in the park?"

"Yes, please."

There was some mail on the sideboard and the morning paper. Usually she glanced at the paper. This morning she felt no interest in it. She picked up the mail. No handwriting that she recognized. Nothing but some typewritten addresses. No need to open them. She knew they were advertisements. She paused at the only hand addressed letter, and tried to puzzle out whose it might be. She could make no guess. She dropped it, not enough interested to open it, and passed into the drawing room,

where she sat looking moodily out of the window, in sight of the telephone at which she glanced from time to time.

Finally she rose and went back and picked up the hand-addressed letter. Then, absent-mindedly, she opened it. Nothing but an advertisement, after all—some printed stuff. She was about to drop it, wearily, when the word “mothers” fascinated her. She picked it up, and carefully read the circular.

MOTHERS!

To all who are mothers;
To all who may be mothers;
To all who have been mothers;
To all who could or would be mothers!

Are you doing your duty by the children of the world?

Is it enough to merely feed, clothe and physically care for the little ones?

Is it enough to be only a nurse?

Have you completed your duty when you turn a child into the world of which you know little and the child nothing?

Who rule the world, who make the laws, who form the conditions in which the child, once matured, must live and complete its being? Men.

Are men, alone, competent to do this?

Is it not the duty of women to assist men in prop-

erly preparing and maintaining the world for children to live in? Is it not their right?

How are these vital conditions, now so grievous remedied? Only by the vote.

Who alone have the right to vote in this state? Men.

What an impeachment of the integrity and the ability of women!

Mothers! Awake! Become alive with the pulse of the world that it may be better fitted to receive children, that they may be better fitted to enjoy it!

Join the most profound movement of the times!

ON! UP! Become one with Progress! Liberty! Equality!

There is but one way for children to become free.

It is for women to become free.

Be slaves no longer!

Women need the vote! Women demand the vote!

VOTES FOR WOMEN!

If interested in this great, progressive and world-encircling movement communicate with

The Secretary,

FULL FRANCHISE LEAGUE.

Constance read this over twice. Then she dropped it listlessly, and went into her bedroom. Kitty brought Bobby in to her, neatly arrayed in his new knickers. She caught him to her

breast and kissed him, with a passionate eagerness that made him howl.

Then she passed him over quickly to Kitty.

"Shall I take him into the park?"

"Yes, Kitty, please—and be—very—careful!"

"Yes, Mrs. Rudd. Come Bobby!"

Kitty had reached the outer door before Constance realized they were gone. She rushed after them and called them back from the hall, where she heard the elevator rumbling up. Again she kissed little Robert, clasped him to her breast, and she struggled with herself to prevent a tear from falling in sight of the nurse.

Now they were gone and she went back to her bedroom and sat down by the side of the phone—waiting.

For some minutes she sat there. Then she rose, with a determined gesture, and began, calmly, to dress herself for the day. She put on her fresh linen, and then a new waist that had come two days before, a very handsome but simple one which Arthur had admired. Her hands passed lovingly over it and she remembered the very places on the back where Arthur's arms had been the only other time she had worn it.

In the midst of this the 'phone rang and her face lighted with a joy that would have made Arthur quite content if he had seen it. Nerv-

ously, but happily, she picked up the receiver, dropping on the floor the new skirt she had taken from its closet.

Woeful disappointment! It was the butcher. She barely managed to tell him, without reflecting, that she had no interest in the fresh sweetbreads he announced, although he strove to remind her that she had cautioned him only the day before to let her know if he should receive any.

Perhaps it was that false alarm on the telephone that caused her to absent-mindedly fasten around her neck, a few minutes later, the pendant she had worn the night before. It was on before she realized that she was to wear her tailored suit. However, she surveyed it critically in the glass—the deep rosy wine of the pear-shaped ruby with its oddly encircling eleven pearls. She counted them again, as she had not done for a year. Yes, the eleven were there, glistening points of creamy white.

Then came her old morning hat, and, finally, the new tailored coat. She surveyed herself in the cheval glass and used the old hand mirror to see if that seam down the left in the back was really as far from the true as it had seemed the first day it arrived.

When she was quite ready she observed the *tout ensemble*, and then quickly took off the pendant. Of course it had no place in such a

simple morning costume. She replaced it carefully in her jewel case. Then she went to the front window and tried to look down where the parade had passed the day before. By dint of holding her breath and clutching the draperies with both hands she managed to get one glimpse of the street, and then she subsided for a time in the window seat, all the while listening intently for the ring of the 'phone.

But the 'phone did not ring. At length, with an exclamation of annoyance, she rose decisively and went to look for the butler. She told him she was going out to do some shopping and might not be home for lunch, and instructed him to tell Kitty when she returned that the baby was to have some of the new graham wafers for lunch, and only half-cream.

"Pardon me, Madam," said the butler as she turned to go.

"Yes, Henry."

"Were you going out immediately?"

"Yes."

"Then, pardon me, if I call your attention to your belt."

She looked down. In two places her waist had not been tucked beneath her skirt. "Thank you," she said, absent-mindedly, but she was vexed when she reached her bedroom, for she could not remember ever before starting out without noticing her clothes to the last detail.

She attended to everything carefully now, and then took the only other fine ring she possessed—an emerald flanked by two diamonds—and slipped it on next to the engagement solitaire she had not taken off her finger for nearly three years. Between every movement she made across the bedroom she glanced questioningly at the telephone.

Finally, when there was nothing more to do, she moved out to the hall and stood there for a minute, quietly, waiting for the least tinkle of the 'phone. She was now grave and preoccupied. Again she rang for the butler.

"If Mr. Rudd calls me tell him," she said, and then glanced at her watch which was in her purse.

"Tell him that I waited until twenty minutes past eleven to hear from him."

"Yes, madam."

"And that I—"

"Yes, madam."

"That I—" she paused, as if uncertain about the message.

"Yes—" said the butler, waiting, patiently.

"That's all," she concluded, definitely.

"Yes, madam," he said and turned to the dining room.

Now she went directly into her bedroom, and this time there was a certain haste in her movements, almost a hint of fear. Again she ab-

stracted her jewel case from its hiding place under some of her lingerie in the lower drawer of her wardrobe, and from it again she took the ruby and pearl pendant. She fastened it firmly about her neck this time and then tucked it inside her waist, so it could not show.

Then she passed out into the hall, and, on the way, swept up from a table, the circular. She slipped it in her purse.

She walked firmly to the door and opened it. Finally she stood there for a long minute, attentively listening for the ring of the telephone. There was not a sound in the house, which was buried in the midday slumber of a well regulated Manhattan apartment.

So she closed the door behind her and rang for the elevator which would take her down to solid earth.

CHAPTER IV.

A FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE ADVANCED WOMAN

Once on the avenue she closed her eyes and then opened them, to become accustomed to the reality. She had almost expected to see lines of women, valiantly determined, four abreast, marching with steady rhythm to the music of a band. Of course that was absurd, and she smiled—just a little—at herself, for she actually saw only a few throbbing automobiles, a spick victoria and a lagging hansom.

She was not quite sure where she should go first, so she began to walk down the avenue. Even her first few steps were different from any other steps she had taken down that brilliant thoroughfare which Arthur had once called “a lane of flushed avarice and twisted ambition.”

Unconsciously her stride was lengthened, and she was thankful that she had prevented her tailor from making her new skirt *quite* so tight around the ankles as he had insisted was necessary to be strictly in the season’s fashion. Even as it was she was prevented from walking as vigorously as she wished.

Something within impelled her to strike out with force, almost boldly. It was delightful to move on, unencumbered without definite designs on any shopping errand, and to feel that she was really part of this vital city. Always before she had hurried *through* it, as if something unnamed and dreadful would happen to her if she did not reach her destination quickly and return home safely.

Now she was not at all sure that she would not return home. In fact, she did intend to return, but there was surely no harm in *feeling*, just for an hour, that she was different this morning than she had been any other morning. She never stopped to look ahead, nor very much behind. It was the first tight clasp in her teeth of the bits that had not been overlong in her mouth.

And it was delightful! There could be no doubt of that. As she walked somehow there faded from the pavement at her side the ordinary motor cars, the prosaic carriages of convenience, the smug vehicles of traffic. Instead, she *felt*, rhythmically striding away, in unison with her own free spirit, that confident amazonian invasion of the day before. In broad platoons, arrayed in spotless white, their bosoms bravely challenging the "flushed avarice" and the "twisted ambition," she *felt* marching there, by her side, that "advanced"

womanhood of which she had heard so much, of which she knew so little.

How glorious it is to be a woman, after all! The world is so wide, so various, and so *new*! She looked upon it, as if for the first time. It was different than she had seen it before. On other days when she walked down that avenue her chief concern had been the garments of the other women she had passed. Now she barely noted them. Instead she felt herself bouyed up by some potent force which had floated in to her through her twelfth story window, which had given her strength, for the first time in her life, to look out, unafraid, from that great height, onto the bawling avenue below.

Yet she did note a woman approaching who was wearing a suit almost like hers, except that it had three buttons in front, instead of two, and the waist was gathered by a cord instead of being plain. She wondered how it was cut behind, and if it had any buttons there. So she turned, ever so little, trying not to be rude, but caught herself with an angry self-castigation, and strode on, looking bravely ahead, without ever finding out if there were buttons on the back, or not.

What were clothes this day!

This anger with herself, for a weakness which, she reflected, must be feminine, promptly developed into a resentment toward her husband.

How contemptuously he had spoken of those women the night before! And that night alone—her mouth was drawn in a wan little wistful twist as she remembered, with a shudder, that he had not once approached her to ask her forgiveness, which was so plainly his duty! And that atrocious Kate Werther! How he had laughed with her, how he had sided with her against his own wife! Had he not even held her hand overlong as he bade her goodnight?

It was noon. She had reached, without noting it, Madison Square, and she promptly forgot everything in the excitement of the scene before her. A crowd of men and women—mostly men, were assembled on the grass listening to the animated address of a young woman on a box, who was talking to them, with much screwing of face, and violent gesture of hands.

Constance quickly joined the crowd, although as yet she did not dare to thrust her way in as far as she wished. Surely, she thought, this must be one of the suffragists. She had seen pictures in the papers of scenes like this. Now the actuality thrilled her. It seemed that destiny was ordering her day precisely right.

“Sisters in sin!” shouted the woman, thrusting an angular fist into the air, and reaching forth valiantly into the faces of her auditors, some of whom snickered, some of whom looked

angrily at the snickerers and most of whom only regarded the speaker stolidly, with some awe and very much curiosity.

"Sisters in sin! Brothers in sin!" appealed the oratress, "Know you not that the Holy Book has appointed a Day of Judgment! I come to tell you—you of this Babylon of wickedness, this Sodom of modern vice, this Gomorrah of man's inhumanity to woman—that the Day of Judgment is upon you! Listen! There is still time! Prepare! I speak from the experience of my own soul. I have lived through wickedness and the ways of the world. I have gone down into the Valley of the Shadow! I have—"

Constance turned away perplexed and placed a hand on her head. It sounded like an evangelistic meeting she had attended when a child. She had expected to hear a suffragist, but how did sin and suffrage hitch? It had never occurred to her before that there was any relation between the two, and yet this young woman was certainly earnest, if, perhaps, ignorant. And Constance felt she must not spurn ignorance. She stopped again to listen, but farther on, at the outskirts of the crowd, when her arm was taken abruptly.

It was Miss Rivers, whom she had met the week before at a tea, where she had gone reluctantly, and where she had instinctively sought

out Miss Rivers alone among the guests because of her sincerity and directness. Constance had told herself afterward that it was Miss Rivers' *brain* that she had liked, though, as matter of fact, Miss Rivers had been the poorest dressed woman in the room and the only one who had paid much attention to Constance.

"Why, Mrs. Rudd, you look as if you were about to join," exclaimed the newcomer.

"I've been thinking about it," replied Constance, seriously, permitting herself to be led down a path, out of hearing of the vehement harangue.

Miss Rivers dropped her arm, in consternation. "What!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," replied Constance, "I don't know just how to go about it, but these suffragists interest me—terribly!"

"Suffragists!" exclaimed Miss Rivers, more aghast than ever.

Constance saw that she had made some mistake, and smiled, asking gently; "I suppose some of the women become excited about it, but still, you can't blame them, can you, when their cause is so just?"

"You didn't think that was a suffragist, did you?"

"Why—why—" Constance stammered, now wondering how she could conceal her mistake, "What—what is it—I mean, she?"

"A Holy Roller?" laughed Miss Rivers.

"A Holy—what?"

"Roller."

"Roller?"

"Precisely—a sort of fanatical religious sect. They think the world is coming to an end; next week, I believe is the time, according to them. They have a place over in Jersey where you foregather on holy ground when the crash comes. They lie down in the dust and pound themselves and roll around. That's why they're called 'Rollers'—'holy heathens,' I call them. They mean well, poor dears, but—Heaven save us—'ignorant' is not the name for it! Ugh!"

Constance laughed until the tears came. She took out her handkerchief and raised her veil to wipe them away. "That is certainly a good joke on me," she said, finally, "you see, I haven't been out very much—not on the streets, like this—and I guess I'm a little green. I was looking for a suffragist, and I found a—"

"Holy Roller!" interpolated Miss Rivers, laughing heartily.

"Precisely," mimicked Constance, and this slight repartee restored her confidence in herself, for she became quite serious again. "I suppose you believe in suffrage, Miss Rivers?"

"Rawther," was the reply, and Constance could not fail to note the little limp of the Eng-

lish accent as though it were not quite dry yet from its mucilaged application. "Everyone does now. It's all the rage, you know. I joined last year. I think every woman in New York—that is every woman who *thinks*, Mrs. Rudd, every woman who is unselfish enough to look about her the least bit and see what slaves men make of women is a suffragist."

"Yes—I—I think so," said Constance, bravely.

Miss Rivers had taken her arm and they had passed out of the square by this time, and the shouts of the Holy Roller were dim in the distance. Suddenly Miss Rivers paused, then asked, with a sidelong sweep of her eyes, and with a perturbation that she tried to conceal;

"Ah! Which society have you joined?"

"I haven't joined—not yet," said Constance, while Miss Rivers' eyes gleamed, and she bit her under lip, with satisfaction. "But," Constance continued, fumbling in her purse for the circular she had received that morning, "I started out to look up the headquarters. I was thinking of joining to-day."

"Which headquarters?" asked Miss Rivers.

"Is there more than one?"

"Rawther."

"I mean just suffrage—*woman* suffrage. There's only one kind, isn't there?"

"My, dear," explained Miss Rivers, now

quite in possession of the situation and thoroughly alive to her opportunities, "Of course there is only one *cause*, but, unfortunately, all the woman who are working for suffrage—for *the cause*—" (When she uttered the phrase "the cause" there was a finality of tone as a mother might say, "*my child*"), "are not—well, let us be as charitable as we can, and say that their motives are not, at least, un-mixed."

"I—I hardly understand," said Constance.

"Of course not," replied Miss Rivers, with just a suggestion of patronage, and then, dropping her eyes virtuously as though she did not wish to call undue attention to a patiently borne suffering, "One who has not been through it, and given her soul, and heart and brain to it and been made to feel that giving *just that* is not enough, could ever really understand what I mean."

She paused and Constance appeared very sympathetic, very envious, very humble, as might a recruit before a veteran as he proudly touched his wounds. She did not know just what to do in this delicate emergency. So she now produced the circular from her bag, and said, humbly:

"I thought I'd go over to this address, and see if I could join. Is that the way? Do you join? Or what do you do? I suppose it takes

a long time. Is there an examination—or—or anything?"

Miss Rivers fairly snatched the "mother" circular from Constance's hand; the circular that had moved her profoundly in the crisis which had come to her that morning. With jealous eagerness she looked at it, ignoring its substance, glancing only at the address below.

"That!" she exclaimed, closing her mouth, pursing her lips and breathing fiercely. "That's from Mrs. Leicester's society—Mrs. *Percy Leicester's personal society!*"

"But it's woman suffrage—isn't it?" asked Constance, now somewhat repelled by an exhibition of feeling whose character she could not mistake.

"Oh! Certainly!" replied Miss Rivers quickly concealing her tone of animosity, which she shrewdly noted she had permitted to appear too pronounced. "But—" she paused, then looked at Constance in quick divination. "You live up there just below the park, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And just off the avenue?"

"Yes."

"That explains it. That is why you got Mrs. Leicester's—Mrs. *Percy Leicester's* graceful attention."

"But her name is not on it."

"Certainly not. She is too shrewd for that. She conceals her small activities under a big and wonderful name. But let me tell you this, that if you lived three blocks east or two blocks west of where you do you would not have heard from Mrs. Leicester."

"I—I don't understand."

"Let me explain," said Miss Rivers, patiently, "Or you may think me altogether too horrid. Only I know that with your understanding of things, your *brain*, my dear, you will see that I am quite justified in feeling as I do—quite justified."

"Please tell me."

"It is just this. Mrs. Leicester has striven to bring into this great wonderful movement that is for the betterment of all humanity an element that is—well—oh—only petty; very worldly; very small."

Constance was still perplexed. "I don't understand just yet," she said.

"Of course not," prattled Miss Rivers, the note of patronage again slipping into her voice, as she noted the humility of her pupil. "You see, Mrs. Graydon, who is really the *brains* of our movement—she gave sixty thousand dollars to us last year—doesn't care that"—snapping her fingers—"for Society. Oh, no, my dear, she doesn't care at all, for that sort of

nonsense. I've seen her. I've talked with her. I know positively she doesn't care two straws for all the Four Hundred. Didn't she open her house at Newport for all of us last year? Doesn't she go down herself into the east side and help all those poor women? Isn't she now the great big *brain*—she gave them a check yesterday for two thousand dollars—behind this undergarment strike?

"But," interrupted Constance, "I thought you spoke of Mrs. Leicester."

"I did, but I only spoke of Mrs. Graydon, who is really in the movement with all the rest of us, heart and soul, to show you how Mrs. Leicester is in it." She paused to note the effect of her words, but sighed as she realized that she must speak more definitely to be understood, which she did now, without further loss of time.

"The whole story is this," and she leaned confidentially over and whispered, very loudly, in Constance's ear, "*Mrs. Leicester is jealous of Mrs. Graydon!*"

"Really!" exclaimed Constance, "Why?"

"Don't you see? Because Mrs. Graydon has always been the real thing Socially, and, being the real thing, she doesn't have to climb or strive, while Mrs. Leicester who has failed to get into the Four Hundred, seeing that Mrs. Graydon, who is a leader, has gone in for suf-

frage, has determined to beat Mrs. Graydon at this game, at least."

"Game?" said Constance, "I thought you were talking of woman suffrage."

"Indeed I am, and that is what that horrid Mrs. Leicester is making of it—a game. Why she gave more than a hundred thousand dollars last year just to make herself conspicuous."

"But I thought you said Mrs. Graydon gave, too?"

"Ah! But she is sincere—and democratic."

"But why should Mrs. Leicester send me a circular? I'm not in Society," laughed Constance.

Miss Rivers gave that sidelong glance again, and then said, observing carefully what effect her words might have; "Perhaps not, but then, your address, you know—is good."

Constance's brow clouded, she knew not why, and Miss Rivers did not fail to note it, so she added, hastily; "Perhaps Mrs. Leicester knows more of your real social standing, dear, than I do."

Constance was confused and blushed, but said only, very simply; "I think not." Miss Rivers heaved another sigh of satisfaction. Both were silent for some time, during which they walked for several squares. Finally Constance said:

"It's terribly confusing, isn't it?"

Miss Rivers stopped, having reached a corner, and replied: "It may be, for a time, but not when you see the issue clearly, and one with your brains can surely see that before long, my dear Mrs. Rudd."

"Do you think so?" asked Constance, forlornly.

"Of course," nodded Miss Rivers. "By the way, why don't you join me? I'm going to a noonday meeting of the undergarment workers."

"Might I?" exclaimed Constance, brightening.

"I'll be more than delighted. And Mrs. Graydon will be there, I think. The papers said so this morning, anyway. I'll point her out and you can see what a really *brainy* woman she is, and she wears a most splendid diamond and emerald ring—it's too stunningly dear for anything. Come along."

As they started Miss Rivers noted, with a lingering antipathy, that Constance carefully replaced the "mother" circular in her purse. But, with a grim smile, the bachelor woman walked along to the great hall where the meeting was to be held, confident that she had won a recruit from the outstretched maw of that petty Mrs. Leicester, whose society the day before had denied her application for admission.

CHAPTER V

THE ADVANCED WOMAN AT CLOSE RANGE

JUST what happened at that meeting Constance never could recall. Her eyes were too big with wonder at the new life she was mingling with for her to analyze or even accurately remember. She felt as she had when, a girl of eighteen, she had attended her first dance. And that had not been so very long before!

Dragged along by Miss Rivers at length she was catapulted into a seat next to a very prim old lady who was closely surveying the stage through a lorgnette, and who, at intervals, reached in her bag and drew forth square lozenges, which she consumed with thoughtful relish, as though carefully counting the mastications.

Lozenges suggested wafers, and wafers suggested something perilously near her heart. Hastily she consulted her watch and instinctively rose.

"Please don't try to move," exclaimed Miss Rivers. "Someone will get your seat and this is splendidly near."

Constance subsided, with an odd little sigh, "I just recollected it was my baby's lunch time," she confessed.

"Oh!" said Miss Rivers, looking upon her with a glance that was a cross between chastisement and pity. "That is too bad. Mothers are such slaves."

Somehow there was an impeachment in the tone, and Constance strove quickly to regain her new-found friend's regard. "Perhaps I need not worry," she explained, weakly, and with a hint of apology. "I left instructions for the nurse. She will look after him." But for several minutes her manner was distracted and even the new excitement could not make her forget immediately.

"Ah!" said Miss Rivers, hopefully and again patronizing. "If you have a nurse you need not worry. Every mother should have a nurse. You are fortunate that you can afford to have one."

"Yes," said Constance, weakly.

For a time, a very short time, the mention of the nurse kept Miss Rivers again in awe of Constance, but within a few minutes she found that the possession of so essential an item of matrimonial furbishing seemed to have no appreciable effect on the self-importance of the recruit, and she speedily became more familiar. There was, perhaps, even a more intimate note

in her friendship after she learned of the nurse than there had been before. In fact, she no longer hesitated to lean over and, with much formal dignity, introduce the prim little old lady, Miss Wilmot, who hastily swallowed a lozenge without its final two bites so she might graciously acknowledge the introduction.

"I heard your expression of solicitude concerning your child, Mrs. Rudd," she said, with an air of aloof courtesy in which she was evidently striving to inject a belated warmth, while she kept an eye on the stage where the leaders were already arriving, "and I sympathize with you."

"Thank you," said Constance, simply.

"Motherhood is a woman's great prerogative—" she hesitated, then glanced at Constance and said, with final authority—"next to the vote. *That* must always come first."

"Yes," said Constance, still distracted with the scene of which she was now a part. Then suddenly recollecting herself she added, hastily, "That is, I think women ought to vote, of course, but—well, they ought to be good mothers, too."

"Certainly. Certainly," soothed Miss Rivers.

The very prim old lady looked reprovingly and with a faint suggestion of scorn at the fairly young bachelor woman. "Nothing pre-

cedes the vote," she spoke again, as with authority. "The vote includes motherhood—it includes everything."

Constance was alarmed, fearing there might be an unpleasant discussion, and Miss Rivers made haste to soothe her aged acquaintance. "Yes," she said, "I agree with Miss Dart that the state should pension mothers and make motherhood independent. Mothers should be free of all cares, even of their children."

"I agree with you, absolutely, Miss Rivers," opined the severe Miss Wilmot, "it is part of the slavery that men place on women that they make them nothing but nurses for their children. Women should be freed, not only of the tyranny of the men, which, though it be benevolent, is still tyranny, but they should also be freed of the tyranny of the child. And I tell you *the vote* is the only way to that freedom!" She settled back with a severe nod.

"My nurse is very good," said Constance, more to herself than to the others, although both pricked up their ears.

"That may be," said Miss Wilmot, tucking a fresh lozenge behind her tongue whence it might be extracted in due time for its proper treatment, "but you are doubtless one of the favored women. Look at these poor things about us—these working girls from the east side. What chance have they when the babies

come? None. It is for them, as well as for ourselves, that we favored women should demand the vote."

Constance glanced about and saw a number of girls who were much poorer than any other girls she had ever seen. Not more than two or three of them were pretty, and this prettiness was touched with a wistfulness that made her heart ache. She vaguely wondered if any of them were mothers.

Then she spoke, ingenuously, "But it might be hard on a mother, sometimes, if she couldn't take care of her own child, and prepare for—" a wistful look came in *her* face, "its coming."

Both the very old, old maid and the bachelor woman were looking at her with an indulgence mingled with reproof. "I have a friend," Constance rattled on, "who is expecting a little baby in about three months and already she has seventeen dresses and twenty-three suits of under linen ready. She has the sweetest little cradle you ever saw, and two of the darlinest lace caps; and two nurses all engaged—a day nurse and a night nurse—and—"

Miss Wilmot turned on her, almost savagely, saying, "Is she preparing that child's *soul* for this world?"

"Why, what—what do you mean?" Constance gasped, frightened more by the manner, than by the question.

"Don't you realize that a mother has all there is to do—everything—with the forming of the soul of an infant, and that if she devotes the months before it is born to the fripperies of dress and the enervating influence of thoughts of luxury that that child is predestined to be a weakling, a dandy, a mere good-for-nothing?"

"Perhaps—perhaps," admitted Constance, "that is so. I had not thought of it in that way before."

"As for the rearing of the child," continued Miss Wilmot, with a precise little gesture of her hand, indicating what a mere detail *that* was, "it can, and, under woman suffrage, will be done by persons properly trained for it. Not one mother in ten is fit to raise her own child. That ought to be a profession, like nursing, in which only scientific rules would be observed. Once we get scientific mothering, by an approved eugenic method, we will do away with crime, sin and failure—"

"What—what do you mean by 'eugenic'?" gasped Constance.

Miss Wilmot became more patronizing, confident now that she had a plastic young mother to impress. "That is merely the new name of the scientific method women will adopt, *by law*, to insure the proper rearing of children, at which they apparently have failed from time immemorial. If women have failed as mothers

they will not fail as lawmakers. They are too fully aware of their faults."

At this moment there was a rustling of gowns on the stage and a very dignified, very determined, older woman, with a kindly face and white hair and a protuberant chin stepped into the view of all. But when she spoke the apparent kindness disappeared. Her lips curled back over teeth that snarled and bit, as her sentences tumbled violently from them.

"Ah!" sighed Miss Wilmot, with rapture, "it's Amy Dart!" And she joined in the clapping that resounded from all over the house. Even Constance had heard of Amy Dart, one of the oldest and most militant champions of woman suffrage, and she looked upon her now with a feeling akin to reverence.

"Before this meeting considers the business for which it has been called I wish to say—" Miss Dart began, with the vigor and intensity of a man of purpose. There was the ring of well-tested metal in her voice, the potency of earnest force in every gesture of her well-knit body, but there was a coldness even in her most fervored statements that seemed to chill the enthusiasm of her hearers even as it was born. Her eyes gleamed with a steady and deep fire that was hardly human. Constance felt both attracted and repelled. She did not want to stay, but she could not have left that room while

Amy Dart was speaking if she had tried with all her will. And somehow, as the militant woman spoke, Constance found herself agreeing with everything she said, despite the instinct in her that bade defiance to these utterances decidedly different from anything she had ever heard or believed before.

She was not charmed; she was compelled—aye, hypnotized by the savage force of that wonderful gray-haired woman into whose eyes it seemed impossible to look and say no. She breathed more quickly; little beads of perspiration came out on her forehead; she was wrought up and stirred as she had not been stirred for years.

“I tell you, my friends,” the intrepid Miss Dart was crying forth, “the time has passed for weak delays. No more procrastinations! No more sophistries which they call feminine! We must throw this slander on the sex into their faces! The men say it is a woman’s war. Then let it be a war. Men say that it is the last ditch and that we are fighting there. Who, then, I ask you, brought the fight into the ditch? Men. Therefore shall women shirk it? Never let it be said of me that my mother’s sex evaded a duty that was so inevitably plain! Men have treated us with contumely long enough. When they could not pamper us they have spurned us; when they could not indulge

us they have abused us; when they could not cajole us they have ignored us. The time now is past for entreaty. We demand our rights—”

With every word that the righteous Miss Dart uttered Constance felt that Arthur had been struck a blow. Once she winced at some aspersion thrown on men, and for a moment recalled some tendernesses that Arthur had shown her. For just that one brief moment her heart flew to Arthur, as though to shield him from the gaunt she-wolf who seemed ravening here for his very blood.

But the next instant another Dartism, tipped with such just and bitter truth, lodged in her heart and opened afresh the wound made there the night before. The neglect she had suffered—no kisses, no beseeching words, no kind caresses as of old had been hers, as was her rightful portion—the abuse; yes (she closed her eyes to think of it) *the blow* laid deep and ponderous hold upon her, and she settled firmly into her seat, enjoying with visible rapture every telling dart placed in the wayward and brutal bosoms of men by that valiant suffrage warrior.

The audience was applauding wildly and she was up in her seat, clapping her hands, before she knew it, and looked down to find Miss Rivers and Miss Wilmot regarding her with a sort of envious admiration. She subsided and

the very old, old maid whispered in her ear, softly:

"My dear, you are a true suffragist, I can see that. You must join before the day passes."

Something was choking Constance. She loosened her waist at the throat and looked around on a sea of faces. She was too full of feeling to make any response, but she felt the kind old lady's bony hand grip hers as in a vise.

"Look! Look!" whispered Miss Rivers, who was regarding the patronage of the older woman with considerable alarm. "There is Mrs. Graydon!"

Constance looked but could not distinguish who might be the woman that Miss Rivers had mentioned as the brains of the movement. "Where?" she gasped.

"There! On the right of Miss Dart—just sitting down."

Constance now saw a woman of comfortable middle age, with a retroussé nose and a pugnacious mouth and chin, beady little eyes that blinked constantly, and reddish hair that seemed to glow with a pure mellow tint of washed umber. She placed a palm on one cheek and the sparkle of a jewel was caught in a stray beam of sunlight and flashed over far across the whispering assemblage.

"She'd give a good lift to workin' goils,"

whispered someone in the seat behind, and Constance could barely restrain herself from turning to see who might be so unmannerly, "if she'd explain to us how she hooked foist a Vankirk an' den a Graydon—bloomin' millionaires, both of 'em."

"What you kickin' about?" responded her companion. "Ain't she wid us in de strike?"

Constance could no longer restrain her desire to see who was talking. She managed to look around and saw right behind her two Jewish girls, in cheap clothes. The first was now saying, "Aw! This is just a stall. She wants us up here fer a front—wid de poipers—see? Yu think she really wants tu pull th' bosses off us? Take it from me she could do it with one little finger, if she really tried. With her cush? Well, I guess! Yu can't fool me with no front show like dis. It ain't on th' level, I tell yu!"

Miss Rivers plucked Constance by the arm. "What dreadful ingratitude," she murmured. "It seems to be always the way with those people. The more you do for them the less they thank you."

But Constance was all attention now towards the stage, for a very young woman was speaking; a woman who could be no older than herself; a vigorous youngster, alive with some power that shone from her eyes and radiated

from her whole person until it captivated the assemblage as even Amy Dart had not captivated it. Here was the same power that Miss Dart had shown, the same vital determination, but with it there was youth—youth battling, youth unafraid, youth heroic, youth feminine, youth beautiful.

“Blessed if it ain’t Ruth Vance!” exclaimed one of the girls in the seat behind.

“The leader of the undergarment makers!” whispered Miss Rivers.

As Constance listened she was carried along in a swift current of appeal. She never could have repeated what Ruth Vance said. Of facts and argument she was innocent. But the magnetic flow of energy, the vibrant personality, the febrile strength that flowed out irresistibly from the speaker Constance felt she could no more have resisted than she once could have resisted Arthur’s kisses.

How she envied that self-assurance! How she gloried in that poise! How her eyes shone with a prayer that some day, she, even she, might be able thus to command, thus to implore, thus to move, thus to stand on a platform with the illustrious Amy Dart and have an audience drink in what she could say!

Ruth Vance sat down and a greater thunder of applause rang forth than had greeted the mature lightning of the august leader. As she

regained a chair by the side of Miss Dart that eminent person took her hand cordially and smiled into her eyes, and Constance was not sure whether or not her feeling of admiration was stronger than the fierce glow of envy which swept over her.

What followed was a haze. Out of it she plucked stray sentences: "Let dawdling housewives languish with their own; ours is the work of the world!" "Are we the playthings of men or their equals!" "If our brains are good enough to teach children their a b c's they are good enough to make laws for those children—and for men and women, too."

Before she realized it the meeting was at an end, and Miss Wilmot was shaking her hand, and murmuring something about "another triumph for the cause!"

Then Miss Rivers, watching over her jealously, led her away.

"That is not the way out," objected Constance, her brain awl and longing for fresh air.

"I know," answered her protecting guide, "but I want you to come this way." She paused and whispered in Constance's ear, "I am going to see if you can't be introduced to Mrs. Graydon."

Constance felt that she lacked the courage and the strength just then. She wanted to be

alone. This first experience of the "advanced" woman which she felt it was perhaps her destiny to be had all but overpowered her. To her it was not a light or a passing moment. Something vital enough to make a change in her life had overwhelmed her, and she felt an impulse to be alone. She wanted to think.

But she had no chance to say this, and Miss Rivers, with a determined stride, had already led her to a passage behind some boxes to the stage, and presently they emerged in the very midst of painted scenery. There Miss Rivers left her with a hastily whispered, "I'll be back immediately. Don't move!" and was gone.

Constance had several minutes to herself, in which she gained her composure, and when Miss Rivers returned she was poised and calm, though rather pale. Her new friend led her forward through a mass of chairs to where three women were bending over some papers on a table. One of them Miss Rivers plucked by the sleeve.

"Miss Hunter," she said, with a subtle air of triumph, as though delivering a captive, "this is Mrs. Rudd," and there Constance was dropped, without further word of explanation and somehow feeling that there had been little etiquette and less consideration in the transaction.

The only feeling she had now was a desire

to escape. Down somewhere in her was a vague premonition that Bobby was crying for her.

However, Miss Hunter, a buxom, ruddy person, with determined cordiality, led her to the table, and, with the same air of subtle triumph which had so curiously distinguished Miss Rivers, thrust Constance before another woman whose hair was of a mellow russet tint and on whose fat finger sparkled an enormous emerald surrounded by several luscious diamonds.

"Mrs. Graydon," said Miss Hunter, almost curtseying, and in an obsequious tone, "this is Mrs. Rudd, who wishes to join the society."

The retroussé nose, the pugnacious chin and the beady little eyes devoured Constance in a quick glance and the precise little mouth said, jerkily:

"I am so charmed to meet you, Mrs. Rudd—so charmed. Sign here!"

Then Mrs. Graydon turned her back and waddled away. Still in a haze, somehow hurt at the treatment she had received, yet unable to say why; still weak from the reaction of the emotions she had experienced during the meeting; and with a vague idea that somehow she was getting even with Arthur for not kissing her the night before, Constance signed her name where she was bid.

CHAPTER VI

CROSSING THE RUBICON

MISS RIVERS was waiting behind the bole of a painted tree when Constance turned from the table where she had signed her name. She came forward and grasped her new friend by the arm and hastened with her through a queer dark passage, where Constance stumbled and would have fallen but for the firm arm of the other, and presently they emerged in the dazzling sunshine on a side street.

"My dear," exclaimed Miss Rivers, as she glanced, with a quick note of alarm at Constance's face, "you are pale. It was rather stuffy in there."

"Yes," admitted Constance, leaning on her arm, "I am just a little faint. I guess I was—excited—and it was all so strange—and—perhaps it was close—and—besides I didn't eat much breakfast, and it's rather late for lunch." She fumbled for her purse, with the idea of finding her watch, but gave up the effort and resigned herself to the ministration of Miss Rivers, who was now all sympathy.

"Come, let us go around the corner—it's just a step—and have a bite to eat, and some tea. I know a perfect love of a place where we can be quiet. It's the 'Old Mother Hubbard.' Ever hear of it? an odd little tea room; quite exclusive, you know."

Still in a daze, Constance entered the Old Mother Hubbard with Miss Rivers and was guided to a side table, a very fragile affair of wicker painted a pale gray and ornamented with little prim white doilies. She sank dully into a pale gray wicker chair that wobbled as she confided her aching body to it, and sat there striving desperately to smile.

Miss Rivers was somewhat alarmed and, ignoring the weakness of her recruit, said cheerily, "Will you trust me to order? I know you'll have some tea. Do you like English breakfast? And some big muffins? They're a specialty here. I know the woman who runs it. She's a very dear person, a lady who used to spend all her summers in England. She knows just how to fix muffins and crullers and scones and things like that—real marmalade from Seville oranges—it's homemade. Now you're my guest. Let me attend to everything."

Meanwhile a waitress, wearing a shapeless gingham wrapper that was part of the technical outfit of Old Mother Hubbard, and which

helped form the "atmosphere" of the place, came up, and Miss Rivers gave her order. Then, as the waitress was hurrying away, she was recalled and something was whispered in her ear. She gave a questioning glance at Constance, then a meaning and knowing smile to Miss Rivers, and departed.

Soon the waitress returned, with little butter plates, knives, forks, spoons and napkins, and, on her second trip, she brought two little thick cups which she set, with an air of mystery, and a smile of cynical approval, before her guests. Constance looked in hers and saw a straw-colored liquid, almost like pale cold tea, with an olive at the bottom.

"What's this?" she asked, eying it suspiciously.

"A Martini," said Miss Rivers, with evident satisfaction, fingering her cup caressingly. "Don't you prefer them? I think they are *so* much better than those sickenish Manhattans, with their pickled cherries. Maraschino cherries are the most indigestible things in the world, you know, and olives really help digestion. Besides," she added, as though the argument was without answer, "a Martini is more virile than a Manhattan. There are twice as many of them used now as there are Manhattans. Nearly all men prefer them. It's only school girls and bridge players that stick

to cherries. I think if we are going to do a man's work we ought to choose a man's drink!"

With this gay running fire of talk she concluded by holding her breath, closing her eyes, clinching one hand and swallowing two-thirds of the straw-colored liquid.

"Cocktails!" said Constance, forgetting her faintness and looking on her companion, with fascination.

"Yes, my dear. Drink it! Don't delay! It will brace you wonderfully. You need something after such a strenuous morning."

"But I—"

"It won't hurt—"

"But I—I don't usually drink them in the middle of the day." Constance had started to say she *never* drank them, but somehow she did not wish to make this damaging confession.

"Oh! But this is no ordinary occasion. Come! Here's to celebrate your joining *the cause!*" Miss Rivers raised her cup and tossed off the remaining third, still with a wry face that melted into smiles as she nibbled at the olive.

Looking at the radiating person before her, of whose good opinion she had conceived a high regard since observing how intimate she was with the leaders of suffrage, while her knees clung to one another with tenacious feebleness and while she feared that if she did not drink

something soon she would surely faint, Constance paused for a moment longer to reflect that Arthur *never* countenanced cocktails for women. To be sure, he had them for his men friends, and to be sure, before them, he frequently offered her one which she invariably refused and at which he invariably chuckled with delight as she ruffled her pretty nose, inwardly wishing that *he* would not drink them, but protesting nothing, by spoken word, nevertheless. As this frequent nightly scene came before her memory a wave of bitterness surged over her again and she tossed her head in such spirited disdain that Miss Rivers, who was watching her closely, smiled in broad sympathy.

With a determined gesture Constance took up the cup, but, just as her lips touched it, she looked about, with a last despairing appeal, hoping that the waitress *would* come with the tea. She *knew* what tea would do, and, despite her braggadocio, her secret delight that she was wickedly doing something of which Arthur would not approve, something she had never done before, she *feared* what this straw-colored stuff that only looked like tea, might do.

But there was no waitress in sight; no tea. So, closing her eyes, holding her breath, clutching the table with one hand, and all the time striving to appear composed, she lifted the cup and swallowed half the cocktail.

Sputter! Gurgle! Cough! It bit into her throat like fire. Her eyes filled with tears. To her infinite embarrassment some of the fiery liquid of the innocent complexion trickled down her chin. She dropped the cup hastily and seized a napkin with one hand, while, with the other, she frantically grasped a glass of water and drowned the conflagration.

Miss Rivers, inclined at first to smile, quickly subdued her facetiousness and looked on with genuine alarm, for Constance was now choking violently. The older woman rose hurriedly, went behind Constance's chair and whacked her soundly between the shoulder blades. Constance managed to drink some more water; coughed some more; wiped the tears from her eyes; and then burst out laughing. The color mounted to her face; her eyes swam in tears; she plied the napkin vigorously.

At length the waitress appeared and now, with a fierce effort at self-control, Constance mastered her epiglottis, and became gradually more composed. Not once again, however, did she have the hardihood to glance inside the little cup where the huge olive lay just covered by the remnant of the pale liquid.

"It's as bad as a bone in the throat when it goes the wrong way," consoled Miss Rivers.

"Yes," assented Constance, weakly, "you

see, I told you I don't—drink—them—at this time of day."

"Here—have a muffin—and some chicken salad—the escarole is very crisp." Miss Rivers politely strove to ignore the embarrassment which now threatened to quite break down her guest. Constance felt that her face was flaming scarlet. Her lips had become dry and the pupils of her eyes were almost feverish. She buttered a muffin and took a bite. Then she nervously abandoned it for a piece of chicken. Then she gulped some tea. Finally she sat back with a wan little smile.

"It's a delicious luncheon," she said, and looked at her watch. Twenty minutes to three! Suddenly a great weakness of longing for her child came over her and she half turned in her chair, forgetting even a normal politeness to her hostess, saying; "I must go home."

Miss Rivers, who meanwhile had summoned the waitress and paid her score, was quite alarmed. Her experienced eyes could not fail to note that her guest was ill. At once she became affectionately attentive. She was at least ten years older than Constance and, though the other was a married woman and a mother, she felt as though she were but a child, and now she lost all the envy, patronage, baffled resentment and superiority she had felt toward Constance

earlier in the day and her attitude became splendidly maternal. She shielded her from the glances of the waitress; she took her arm solicitously, under the guise of friendly insouciance, and guided her from the tea room.

The fresh air of the street seemed to revive Constance, but only to a realization that she must go hurriedly. She broke away from the restraint of her companion's arm and would have hastened on without even thanking her if her knees suddenly had not gone back on her. Except for the maternal arm of Miss Rivers she might have slipped to the sidewalk.

"My dear," this with tender, warm understanding that made itself felt, "you must let me look after you a bit, you are weak. This has been an exciting day for you."

"Yes," nodded Constance, "It *has*—been—exciting—I must go home—home!" Again she tried to walk alone, and then fetched up, with an odd little laugh of contentment, snug against Miss Rivers' strong arm. She now realized that she had eaten nothing for breakfast and little more for lunch; that she had had several hours of intense excitement; and that, somehow, strange and impossible as it seemed, the pale liquid had curiously effected her. She did not *feel* weak, but she *was* weak; she did not *feel* like crying but she *wanted* to cry. Only the

presence of the hurrying people on the street and the very shame of it prevented her from weeping.

"Come with me," she dimly heard her new friend say, "My apartment is very near—you can rest there."

"No. No," protested Constance, "I must go home—home!"

Yet she made no effort to go. She only clung the closer to the friendly arm, and Miss Rivers, with the tenderest concern, no longer spoke to her except as she would have spoken to a child. "Yes," she assented, "You can go home soon, but let us rest a little, first—just a little," and, gradually, guided her steps two blocks up one street and a block and a half down another, until they reached a modest, neat, rather small apartment building in the middle of a very respectable and quiet block. Together they entered an elevator and were soon before a door on the second floor.

Miss Rivers fitted a key hastily in the lock, threw open the door, ushered her friend in, and exclaimed, cheerily; "Now, honey, the first thing you must do is to loosen your corsets, and then lie down. You'll be right as a pippin as soon as you have rested a little."

But Constance lacked the strength to do more than collapse into the nearest armchair. Her head sank weakly back and she fumbled, inef-

fectually, at her veil. Miss Rivers promptly helped her and soon the hat was off. Constance now lay with her head back against the chair, while from her eyes welled, slowly, one huge tear after another. Miss Rivers, adroitly concealing any curiosity she might have felt, showed only pity and concern. She had not been so stirred in years. She bustled into her bedroom to find a bottle of smelling salts and when she returned she saw that the barriers of reserve were down.

Constance was weeping, steadily, deeply, as though her heart would break. The older woman gently handed her the bottle of salts; fussed tenderly with a pillow which she placed behind her, and, from time to time, caressed the soft brown hair of her new friend, soothing her with little child words, unable to account for the situation, and vaguely alarmed.

"I want to go home. I want to go home," Constance kept repeating.

"Yes, dear, you shall go immediately. I'll call a taxi—"

At this Constance became curiously alarmed.

"No. No," she exclaimed.

"Very well. There's no hurry. Only rest a few minutes. It will do you good."

The tears had now ceased and Constance looked up, with eyes dilated, as by some fearful alarm. "I can't—I can't—" she urged.

"Yes, dear," said Miss Rivers, soothingly, "You can't what?"

"Can't go home."

"Certainly, my dear. Of course you can, dear—in a few minutes, as soon as you have rested. The heat was too much for you. It is a very warm day."

Constance now sat bolt upright. "I tell you I *can't* go home!" she exclaimed, with a petulant fierceness.

"No?" with wonder, and then with concern, as though still humoring a child. "Why?"

Constance dropped her head on her breast and the tears welled forth again. Finally she half mumbled: "I've left my home—my husband—my baby."

Now something clutched at Miss Rivers' heart, and she downed a fierce desire to ask questions, but saw that it was needless to ask; she would only have to wait and she would hear all. So she busied herself, loosening the other's neck band, unbuttoning her trim little boots, and plying the smelling bottle.

Impelled by this very evident sincerity of concern, and hungry, beyond words, for sympathy, Constance blurted out: "I'll never go back to my husband, but oh! how I want my baby!"

Miss Rivers tried to say something, but found nothing to say and so said nothing, her curiosity in fine constraint.

This silence Constance interpreted as a challenge, as a veiled question of her right to the action she was now announcing, for the first time, even to herself. So she broke forth, fiercely; "Would you live with a man who struck you?"

Miss Rivers gasped. It was richer even than she had imagined. With a righteous indignation she exclaimed, almost as fiercely as Constance had: "Never!"

"Nor will I!"

There was a considerable silence, during which Constance partially regained her poise. Her heart was pounding in alarm at the assertion she had made, but she felt that she had been forced by circumstances to account for so extraordinary a scene. Now, the assertion once made, everything seemed easier. The events of the night before came to her vividly. She no longer doubted that Arthur *had* struck her. Had she not plainly *seen* the red welt in the glass—a long, shameful crimson spot glowing on her neck accusingly? Miss Rivers' quick sympathy completed her self-assurance. With curiously quick recuperation she recovered much of her poise. She wiped the tears from her eyes. She sat up and arranged her hair. Miss Rivers hovered around her with solicitous attention that pleased her mightily.

What a story! Was there, indeed, ever a

happy marriage? Men were all alike, such brutes, unworthy of even the worst of women! How gratified she was that *she* had never made *the* mistake! So, reflecting, Miss Rivers comforted herself, and, at length, her new friend.

Constance, however, was not inclined to go into details, and Miss Rivers hesitated long before she dared address a question on so delicate a subject. Half an hour passed, during which they talked on indifferent topics, Miss Rivers, however, doing most of the talking.

Every minute that passed confirmed Constance in what before had been the vaguest of determinations—to make Arthur smart, and smart deeply for his neglect, his even downright brutality of the night before. She longed desperately for Robert, but, at that moment she could not see the way clear to reaching him.

Suddenly she reflected that she could go home now, spend an hour with Robert, and get away again long before Arthur arrived from work, but, looking at Miss Rivers, who was now expressing almost a proprietary interest in her, she saw that she could not do this. How explain her variation? How account for such weakness before a woman who had shown throughout the day the true sternness, the valiant determination of that glorious “new” woman she longed, sincerely, to become?

Nothing more had been said of her trouble, save only the few ejaculatory words of confession and sympathy that both had uttered. More words seemed useless. Both seemed to understand each other.

A short time later Miss Rivers suggested that Constance lie down for a bit, and compose her nerves. Constance rejected the proposal, but the other had, before the objection could be made, prepared her bed, by removing the pillow covers and pulling down a pillow.

"Come. Just forty winks. It will make a new woman of you!"

They both laughed heartily at this. Constance still demurred, but Miss Rivers had her way.

As she was tucked in by the bachelor woman the very young married woman, still mildly protesting at the espionage, said, "I shouldn't do this. I must get away very soon. I must attend to some business."

"Never mind, my child. You lie there now for a half hour. It will do you a world of good. You're just tired."

And as, with a sigh of vast relief, Constance turned into the pillow she reflected that, though she had no place to go, she would not let Miss Rivers know it. Moreover, if she could only get a little more strength in her legs, she would be able to go out and fulfill a plan which had

been slumbering in her mind all day long. She would go to a hotel and write Arthur that she was not coming back, and then she would wait—and soon he would come down there—charging, as was his way—with a sort of indignant tenderness—that he would *order* (and, after all, she really liked to have him order) her to come home at once; she would indignantly refuse; then he would implore; perhaps a tear would come to his eyes. Ah! If he would only cry a little and beg her to forgive him she would melt utterly. She would go back instantly.

For a time she tried to fight off sleep, for she knew she must not stay there very long. She must get out where she could think and make a plan and carry it through. But she was very tired, very weak and her prolonged excitement had now gone through twenty-four hours, with very little rest. And it was still early in the afternoon. She would not lie there more than an hour.

CHAPTER VII

TWO O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING COURAGE

A queer ray of light shining in Constance's eyes woke her. No ray of light had ever shone from the twelfth floor into her bedroom from without and she rose with a start, first reaching out swiftly to touch Arthur, where he should be lying; always had been (it seemed) lying there beside her.

A ghastly numbness came over her as she realized first that she was alone, and, almost simultaneously, that she was in a strange room. She started to get out of bed, when a vague fear consumed her. She huddled back under the clothes and cowered there for a minute, as she slowly realized where she was.

Now she saw that a high arc light from the street was partially illuminating the room. She heard a clock ticking, and she was consumed with desire to know the time. Bit by bit she conquered her fears, and slipped out of bed. She tried to make her way to the clock, but she stumbled over a chair.

"Is that you, dear?" came a voice from the adjoining room, to which the door was open.

"O Miss Rivers! Yes."

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No—thank you." Constance was sitting now in the chair, rubbing her shin where she had barked it, with only her shoes off and her corsets unloosened. She heard her companion getting up.

"Please don't mind me, I just wanted to see the time."

"It's dreadfully late. Go back to sleep—that's a dear."

"But what time is it?"

"There's a clock on the dresser."

"Thank you."

Constance found the clock, but could not make out the figures so she carried it to the window.

"Did you find it?" came from the other room.

"Yes, thank you."

"What time is it?"

"Five minutes after two."

"Time for all good girls to be in bed," came the answer, cheerily. Then, in a moment Miss Rivers entered, a matronly figure, rubbing her eyes, and yawning. She saw the raised curtain at the window. "How utterly thoughtless of me," she exclaimed, pulling down the curtain and turning an electric switch. "You see, I feared to disturb you. I wanted you to rest, and

you needed it, you poor dear. Come. You can get properly undressed now." She rummaged in a drawer and produced a fresh nightgown, which she laid on the foot of the bed, carressing the brown head, soothingly, as she passed.

"There! Take off all those horrid clothes and get properly comfy. It's a good bit—yet—to breakfast, and don't bother in the morning. I never get up till late."

She kissed her guest and discreetly disappeared, calling "Goodnight" after her, as she partially closed the door.

Constance was in a dead funk. It seemed that some terrible calamity had overtaken her and she was desperately unable to decide what to do. In this extremity she noted, with alarm, that her neatly tailored skirt, was sorely wrinkled, and she began examining it with troubled minuteness. Yes. It must be carefully pressed before she could venture out again. She took it off and hung it carefully over the foot of the bed. Then she felt mussed and soiled throughout. Her other clothes annoyed her. She slowly took them off, looking, between the discarding of each garment, at the clock, which had a fatal fascination for her. Somehow that clock was accusing her of nameless crimes, and she was unable to rightly conclude how she came to be in so alarming a situation, or how she could get out.

Meanwhile she slipped into the nightrobe, which enveloped her completely. She smiled oddly as she realized that it was twice big enough, and she felt, almost mechanically, of its coarse linen, comparing it mentally with the fine cambric of her own nightclothes, and noting the absence, in the collar, of the little openwork frill, without which no nightdress, in her eyes, was complete.

Presently she climbed back into bed, and lay there, staring up, with dilating eyes, at the electric light.

"What's the matter, dear, can't you find the switch? It's just behind the door," came from the other room, in a sleepy tone.

"No—I—thought," said Constance, hesitatingly, "I'd leave the light on! I'm afraid to sleep alone—in the dark."

"Very well," came the answer and she could not fail to note the slight annoyance in the tone.

"Does it bother you?"

"No. Not if I close the door," and Miss Rivers rose and closed the door.

Constance quickly jumped out of bed and opened it, calling in a cajoling tone, which immediately won the bachelor woman, "I'll put the light out, if you'll let the door stay open."

"Very well," laughed Miss Rivers, "You can do both, if you prefer."

"No, thank you," said Constance, turning off

the switch, "I'll be all right now—if you don't mind the door being open."

"Not at all. Goodnight! Sleep tight! You'll be as fine as Friday in the morning."

Again Constance was alone, in the dark, in a strange bed, in a strange house, with a stranger. She had prolonged the details of permanently retiring as long as she could, and there was nothing more for her to do but lie there, staring straight up at the ceiling, eyes dilated, pulses feverish.

She took some slight comfort in clasping tightly the pendant which was suspended from a tiny gold chain, and which she had kept close to her bosom. Then she felt of her wedding ring and pressed it into her finger until it hurt.

Reviewing the events of the past day she inwardly questioned her actions. Had she not really intended to leave her home? Else why had she so carefully worn that pendant, which she never before had worn except for some unusual evening function? Why, indeed, *had* she worn it? This sinister question faced her now, in the dead of night, where she was alone and could not escape it. And the answer she found had two effects upon her; it strengthened while it hardened.

Slowly she felt herself being buoyed up with a resolve that came upon her quietly and that sustained her far more than the fierce resolve

she had made several times, spasmodically, the day before. She had not intended to stay away all night. She had not really intended to leave home, she told herself.

Yet, here she was, away for the first time since her wedding, and the pendant was visible evidence that she had really intended to stay when she left. Wrestling with this problem, and finding no solution she heard the clock strike three, and made up her mind to sleep.

But sleep would not come. Her temples seemed bursting. She noticed that her hands were clenched. She opened one to pass it across her forehead, and found that it was moist with perspiration. She tossed and tossed in bed, and lay there, burning with bitter accusations against Arthur, recalling every slender incident where he had slighted her, magnifying the remembrance of the night before when she had, so meekly, so truly humbly, sought his couch, and kissed him—only to be rewarded with a blow. She clung fondly to the memory of that blow. In the haze of her ideas it seemed the only tangible thing she could grasp, and she went back to it, again and again, repeating to herself: “He struck me—struck me!” The blow became her cross, and what proceeded it a martyrdom she now protested to herself she would face no longer.

Yes. He had struck her. There was no

doubt of that. And she had left him, intentionally, forever. The pendant proved that. What had intervened—the suffrage meeting, this strange apartment, that bewildering, that nauseating experience in the Old Mother Hubbard (Ugh!)—were but incidents. The blow was the vital thing. It was cause enough for all else. Why, then, not sleep, and compose herself so that in the morning she could face what she had to face calmly and with courage?

Still, sleep did not come. Then she remembered, as though by a lightning flash, that which she had been cautioned frequently by her father;—never to sign any document without reading it carefully. And had she not signed something the day before at the suffrage meeting, without even glancing at it?

But she consoled herself easily. Were these women not of the highest standing; did they not represent all that was best and bravest; were they not engaged in a great movement to help all women; was she not a woman sorely in need of help; how then could she have done aught but what was right in so willingly placing her name on that formidable document?

She remembered what Amy Dart had said—the fight had come to the last ditch; men themselves had brought it there; and women could no longer shirk—and she felt herself grow brave. She was even tempted to rise and close

the door to show Miss Rivers, even by so slight an independence, that she was not a weakling.

Yet, these thoughts did not compose her. Curiously, she felt no desire to sleep. She wished it were morning. She wanted to go out that very minute and fight—yes, fight, even in the last ditch. How, she did not stop to think, but in some way to humble Arthur; some way to bring him penitent to his knees. That she would win she had no doubt. Who would not win led by so glorious, so determined a soul as that wonderful Amy Dart and the no less wonderful—aye, even more wonderful Ruth Vance, with her flashing gray eyes and that resilient young voice bespeaking triumphant youth.

Still she did not sleep. The clock struck four. She turned over again and rearranged the pillow which had grown hot and wadded. She felt that she would stifle, and she heard a milk wagon rattle on the pavement below the window. But she was not afraid. Certainly not. For what she had gone through that day she would never be afraid again. Was she not, at last, an individual, a human being with a right to think for herself and of herself as well as of her husband and child—

At the thought of the child she hesitated. What could she do without Robert? This drove rebellion from her breast for a time and she became even more wide awake. Soon, however,

a happy thought came to her. Did she not belong now to the suffrage organization; did not these women understand all about these difficult matters with which other women had to contend; would they not, therefore, solve her problems for her? Surely, a woman so wonderful as Amy Dart would know what to do in a case like this. Had not Miss Wilmot said that the only time a mother was responsible for her child was *before* its birth? Constance consoled herself with the thought that *she* had conscientiously read a volume of Drummond's sermons in the months before Robert came even if she had been frivolous enough to prepare a score of undergarments with her own fingers. Had not Miss Wilmot also said that children ought to be in the hands of persons *trained* for the purpose, after birth? Another consolation! Kitty was a very competent person, trained for the purpose of taking care of children.

Having thus quieted her growing alarm for the welfare of Bobby she told herself she *must* sleep. Still sleep evaded her. The clock struck five. Light was struggling through the curtains, and suddenly she felt herself grow weak again. Oh! If Arthur could only be touched—*there*—by her side. And there was a dull throb in her head now. His hand would have soothed it.

A few tears, not from the surface, but from way down deep, as from a hidden spring in the

infinite depths, welled from her eyes, silently, and she let them proceed without the will to stop them. She was as weak as water. She lay there and said, passively, to herself, that she had no desire to live. In fact, she thought she was dying. Indeed, it would be pleasant to die, right now, as she lay.

Perhaps, then, Arthur, would realize what he had done. Probably he would never marry again. He would become silent and sad and would carry her memory to *his* grave, and would bring up little Robert to revere the beautiful memory of his mother.

Oh! She sat up in bed, fiercely, and struck her pillow;—if she could only *force* him to his knees!

Then she collapsed utterly, while the pale, thin dawn slipped around the edges of the curtains and slowly illuminated the room.

Now her face softened, for a peaceful thought had come to her. This was the morning of her twenty-third birthday, and Arthur had never, since he had known her, let a birthday pass without bringing her a present, and making a holiday of it. With this thought the hardness passed from her heart; the blood stopped beating so wildly in her temples and her wrists; her hands unclenched. Then she turned over, with a contented sigh, and slept.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTLE LINE

“Morning, Merry Bright Eyes!”

For a brief moment Constance thought it was Arthur, and she turned over with a radiant smile to greet Miss Rivers. Then her smile faded, like the swift passing of a transformation scene, and she rose, wearily.

“It’s you,” she said, and her lower lip trembled.

“Why, honey—child, you don’t seem glad to see me!”

“Yes, I am,” protested Constance, with that odd little twist in the corners of her mouth, “but I was dreaming—I guess—and it didn’t seem—well, quite natural to find you standing here.”

Miss Rivers laughed. “You look as bright and fresh as a new daisy—a regular field daisy!” She chirruped.

Constance hastened to the glass and looked at herself in amazement. She pushed back her hair, threw up her head and gazed long and intently at her face, free utterly of wrinkle, pink

and fresh and sweet, her lusterful eyes swimming as in dew.

"I'm a perfect hag!" she exclaimed.

"I wish I were as haggish as you, then," said Miss Rivers in a banal way, which showed her envy.

Constance smoothed away the hair from her forehead and looked again. She had rather expected to find herself seamed with wrinkles, hollow-eyed and colorless. "*I am* a sight!" she protested.

"A vision," corrected Miss Rivers.

"But I had an awful night!"

"You slept like a top!"

"I had the most frightful dreams!"

"You look as if they were heavenly!"

"But I can't look good—I *don't* look well."

Constance took the hand mirror to the window, still unconvinced, wondering if some optical illusion had converted the old, old woman inside of her into the lovely young woman who confronted her in the glass.

"As soon as you're ready come and have some coffee. You may not like it, for I made it myself, but it will stay you for awhile, anyway."

Constance delayed appearing in the other room as long as she felt she reasonably could, for she was hopelessly forlorn again. She hardly knew what she must do, and she was groping for bearings. At last, her mind made

up, she appeared, and sat down opposite the cordial and buxom friendliness of the bachelor woman. "How cozy everything is here!" she exclaimed, looking at the percolator, the egg boiler and the electric toaster which were merrily busy on a side table.

"Do you like it? Well, it is all my own. I'm my own master—or mistress, which amounts to the same thing, nowadays."

Miss Rivers rattled on, oblivious of the curious silence Constance now maintained, explaining the details of her light housekeeping, apologizing for the smallness and meagerness of things, and tactfully uttering no reference to what had happened the day before. Yet, from time to time, Constance was conscious of a curious quizzical glance cast upon her.

This glance made her restless and anxious to get away. Miss Rivers felt the restlessness, and managed to drop the glance. Nevertheless Constance finished her breakfast quickly and began looking for her hat.

"What!" exclaimed the bachelor woman, "You are not going so early. It's not nine o'clock yet."

"Yes, I must be going," said Constance, wondering how old the matronly maid might be and guessing that thirty would be near the mark. At the same moment Miss Rivers was estimating Constance's age at twenty-five. Noth-

ing could have proved more fully the ripening friendship of these women than these estimates, one two years and the other three years wide of the mark, and both charitable.

“Where are you going?”

The question was all but cruel. Constance dropped her hands limply and looked out of the window. “There is some business I must attend to,” she said lamely.

“Oh!” the exclamation expressed a hurt confidence and Constance felt that she had not properly rewarded the attention she had been shown. It is difficult to tell where friendship really begins, but, when kindnesses have been poured, gently, one after the other, into the cup, it at length flows over and a friendship wells up, as from a spring.

Constance now felt that she had a friend from whom she could conceal nothing, so she looked bravely at Miss Rivers and said; “I’ve been thinking I would go home.”

“Now?” The bachelor woman was plainly shocked. With a dull despair Constance realized that she would not be permitted to forget her hasty confidence of the day before. Yet, for a moment, she thought she could brave it out.

“Yes,” she assented, “I must see my baby.”

“After—after—” the matured friend, with a countenance indicating deep surprise, hesitated

at the word which was trembling on her tongue, which had been trembling there since yesterday.

"Yes," said Constance, humbly, "Even though he struck me." She glanced in pitiful distress at her friend and suddenly went to her, and placed her arm about her, "Please," she implored, "I want you to do me a great favor."

"My dear, of course—"

"Then, please, don't let me think of that—what I told you yesterday—again."

Miss Rivers embraced her warmly and said brightly; "I understand, dear. I understand perfectly."

"You have been very kind to me. We must see each other often."

"By all means."

"And I will ring you up later to-day, and thank you again for all you have done for me."

Miss Rivers was much confused. She did not quite understand now the turn affairs were taking, for she saw that Constance was determined to go, had placed on her hat and was striving to smooth her skirt so it would be presentable, but she managed to say; "Don't bother to-day. You will have too much to do. Only I wish you would not hurry off this way."

"I must."

The older woman was busy now clearing up

the breakfast things and Constance was at the door. Then, suddenly, to Miss Rivers came an inspiration. She went to Constance and placed an arm about her, looked confidently in her eyes, and said;

"I know I am meddling in what is none of my business, but—well, I am older than you, and I have been battling with the world a lot—and, I know a good many things."

Constance impulsively returned the embrace, saying; "My business will always be your business—whenever you are kind enough to make it so."

"Then—" Miss Rivers still hesitated.

"Please say what you intended to say."

"Not unless you really want me to say it."

"*Please* do. Aren't we friends?"

The sweet, almost forlorn manner of the younger woman made the older look on her as though she were a sister in need of protection and advice, and, with another vigorous hug, she again protested;

"But I don't want to refer to what—is—necessarily—painful."

Constance's heart almost stopped beating. How bitterly now she regretted that quick confidence of the day before, made, she now knew, under the stimulation of that dreadful cocktail, and yet, how desperate her situation! She *could not* explain; her dignity demanded that

she bravely face the consequences of her own words, even if she had, perhaps, exaggerated the *shove* with which Arthur had thrust her from him the night before. She inclined her head and calmly closed her eyes.

"Yes," she said.

"Then let me tell you, dear, what perhaps you do not fully understand. I feel that it is almost my duty to tell you."

"Yes. Yes," said Constance, in quick halting tones.

Miss Rivers must have been conscious of the momentous character of what she was about to say, for she still hesitated, breathed deeply, and took a firm hold of herself, reflecting carefully, before she said; "If you go back—now—to your husband, after—what he did—you lose your right to protest. Did you know that?" She added the question, with the most kindly inflection.

Constance turned on her fiercely. "What do you mean?" she demanded.

Miss Rivers blanched, but continued patiently, as though reasoning with a child; "I mean that your right—your legal right, and that is really the only right we women have to claim—to hold your husband accountable for what he has done is gone if you return to him now—without protest, without firmly taking your stand, once for all."

The fierceness disappeared from Constance even as it had come. Again she was as weak as water and collapsed wearily into a chair. "Please, please explain to me what you mean!" she insisted, and again Miss Rivers felt her matronly powers rising within her.

"It is just part of the shameful tyranny of men—just a part, but a woman should know it. If we learn it as men do we can come to fight them with their own weapons—the law!"

"But I—I don't care anything about the law," said Constance, weakly.

"Ah—perhaps, not—now, but you will find, in due time, and perhaps very quickly that the *law* will be your only refuge, and I only want to prepare you for that time. It is only right you should know what you have to face."

Constance was looking out of the window. She was silent for a long time. Then she said slowly: "I was hasty. I am sorry I told you—what I did yesterday. I must go back home. It is my duty. *I must see my child!*"

Miss Rivers was very patient. "Yes, my dear," she urged, gently, "I can understand just how you feel. Any true woman feels that way, and it is just that weakness of true women of which men have so fiendishly taken advantage. For so many centuries they have had the whip hand over us, they have studied us with

cruel determination, with infinite patience; they have learned our weaknesses, all of which come from the very best qualities a woman has, qualities that very few men ever possess; and they have so framed every law, and every convention that we are bound, hand and foot, by our natures."

"I want my child!"

"Yes, but—listen! I knew a woman just like you once. She was a wonderful mother, a devoted wife. Her husband *seemed* to be a nice man. In reality he was a *brute*—nothing more—most men are! Once he struck her, not seriously, just a little, but it shocked her so, outraged her so that she left him—for a day only. Then she went back and forgave him. He promised not to do it again. Did he keep his promise? Not much. He knew what she did not know—that *in that act of going back to him she had lost all right to complain!*"

"That's horrible! I can't believe it!"

"It does sound incredible, but it is true, and it is only one of the injustices women have to bear in a world ruled by laws made by *men only*. This woman I speak of did not believe it until things grew so bad—her husband had struck her again and again, not once or twice, but many times—that she could no longer endure the physical pain to say nothing of the humiliation and degradation to her womanhood, and so she left

him, and applied for a divorce. Then what do you think she found?"

"What?" Constance's eyes were dilated as wide as a child's at a tale of horror.

"The judge refused to listen to her complaint, for, as he said the law was (*what a despicable law!*), she had condoned the offense by returning once. In forgiving the blow she had given her husband the right to strike her as often as he pleased!"

"Horrible!"

"Monstrous!"

"Terrible!"

"And still they say we have no *slavery* to-day!"

"Are—you—sure?" said Constance, panting, frightened.

Miss Rivers smiled indulgently. "Am I sure? Come with me to the suffrage headquarters and I will show you printed accounts—*printed*, mind you, so they can't possibly be wrong—that tell worse stories than that, true stories of this very year we are living in, stories of mothers torn from their children, of women forced to live with brutal men, of little infants given over to unspeakable atrocities, of—" Inspired by her more than sympathetic audience the bachelor woman gathered fire from her memories of the speeches she had heard, and might have talked for hours had she not

been interrupted by the still personally overwrought anxiety of her guest.

"Did you say that—other—woman had a child?" asked Constance, who had heard little of the general diatribe.

This brought Miss Rivers back to her personal appeal. "Yes," she said, "that was the worst of it. The judge refused the woman a divorce, which she wanted on the grounds of cruelty, but said she could have a separation, and—imagine!—*gave the child to the father*. Could anything be more cruel, more unjust!"

"Oh! Oh!" Constance muttered to herself, looked abstractedly out of the window for several minutes, and then, with an appealing glance at her friend, and with a complete trust that her knowledge and wisdom were final, asked, almost with fear:

"And if the woman did not go back—what then?"

"Ah!" triumphed the bachelor woman, again exulting as she had the day before, over her apparent prey. "Then she has an advantage over her husband. *That* is where men have written laws to make them *look* just. It sounds well to say that a woman has an equal right with a man if she does the *manly* thing and stays away! The trouble is most women do the *womanly* thing and go back!" This came with deep bitterness, as though Miss Rivers her-

self spoke from desperate personal experience. Constance longed to ask her what terrible thing had happened to her, and resolved she would do so at the first opportunity, but just now her mind was too absorbed in this startling new problem that confronted her.

"Then if a woman doesn't forgive her husband she can have her child?" she asked, naïvely.

"After the divorce—yes—usually!"

Divorce! The word lay there, ugly and potent, before them. Constance pictured it, a slimy, loathsome, fascinating and atrocious object, crawling in a chasm that separated her from all else, even her friend. She looked up with deeper fright and said, very simply:

"I could never ask for a divorce!"

"Perhaps not *now*," said Miss Rivers, with an air of benevolent, maternal finality, as though quite accustomed to dealing with such cases.

"I *never* could!"

"Perhaps not, but you don't want to give up your *right* to one. That is what all of us women must jealously guard—our *rights*!"

"No," assented Constance, weakly.

"Above all—your *right* to your child!" Miss Rivers' lip curled again with bitterness, as she said: "A mother's right to her child is God-given, but, pusillanimous man has stormed

Heaven and made it judge-given!" The words were Amy Dart's, but neither she nor Constance realized it.

Constance now took off her hat and began, absent-mindedly, to pick up the dishes from the table and carry them to the kitchenette which she found, as by instinct. The bachelor woman looked at her, in amused fascination.

"Never mind," she said, "I'll take care of them—they are nothing."

"It was very selfish of me not to want to help with the dishes," was the only comment Constance made, as she resolutely continued with her work. Miss Rivers saw there was no protest to be made, and so she cheerfully bustled on, with her volunteer assistant. Neither spoke more than a few words, and these on quite irrevelant topics until the dishes were done, and the beds made, and the place swept.

Then Constance put on her hat, with a new-born light in her face. The bravery, the hardness and strength that had swept in upon her in those early and lonely hours of the morning seemed to have become again hers. Her fear was gone; gone was her tremulous hesitancy.

Miss Rivers looked with awe, and quizzical concern at the change. "Where are you going now?" she asked, at length.

"To headquarters!" said Constance, in a

quiet, casual tone, as if it were the most natural and inevitable place in the world to seek.

Miss Rivers was aghast, but quickly concealed her amusement and delight. "Wait for a minute!" she called, reaching for her hat.

"Very well! But hurry!"

However, when they reached the street, another change came over Constance. The morning was precisely what the previous morning had been, dazzlingly clear and bright, balmy with late spring. It had been just twenty-four hours since she had left her home, and though it seemed she had lived ages in that single day, now the old habits, the old instincts became again paramount.

As she walked along by her new friend, a bit of common sense flashed upon her. She realized that she would probably not have stayed away from home over night if that strange combination of circumstances—the exciting meeting, the unwonted cocktail, the hospitable Miss Rivers—had not conspired to so break in upon her gentle and prosaic life. Moreover, she reasoned with herself, she did not have to give up her home to gain all that she had thought to gain. Of course what Miss Rivers had told her about the laws that might permit her husband to strike her was a matter of grave concern, but she saw a way around this trouble by assuring herself that she could go home *now*,

in the morning, see Bobby for a few minutes, and *then* go down to the suffrage headquarters and continue her campaign for freedom. Her chief purpose was to make Arthur humble, and to show him that he could no longer treat her as he had. She did not really wish to leave him—not yet.

So, when they reached the corner of the avenue, she said to Miss Rivers: “I have some business I must attend to right away. So give me the address of the headquarters and I will meet you there in an hour and a half.”

Miss Rivers could make no objection to this and they parted, Constance boarding a bus and the bachelor woman continuing on foot uptown.

Constance let herself into her apartment at almost the very hour she had left it the morning previous. She slipped in quietly, like a criminal returning to the scene of his misdeeds, but, once in, she hastened to the nursery, without removing even her hat.

It was empty. Then she reflected that this was the regular hour for Kitty to take Bobby to the park. There was nothing to alarm her in that, but it did depress her. Somehow the minute she left Miss Rivers, she had shaken from her all that talk about “eugenics” and “scientific mothering” and “woman suffrage.” It had fallen away like an evil dream, and she had hastened home glad.

And now here it was on her again, with recurring force, a visible demonstration of her uselessness. Bobby did not need her; he had Kitty, a person not disposed to smother him with foolish cries and selfish emotions. He had a father to provide for him, a pleasant and comfortable home. What need had he of her? Was not her desire to see him purely selfish?

These thoughts prevented her from hurrying into the park to find him, but they did not prevent her from straining her ears to catch the sound of an opening door, in the hope that Kitty would return with him.

Meanwhile she passed into her bedroom and sat there, consumed with emotions concerning Arthur. After all, her husband was the vital concern in her scheme of life. She smiled ironically, recalling Miss Wilmot's assertion that a child is a "mere detail." What she most wanted was Arthur's voice, a sight of Arthur, a sound from Arthur, and he had been as silent as the tomb since the night before last.

The more she thought the more angry she became. She had expected that her absence would make him nervous and anxious about her, and that then he would be the more in her power to bend as she chose. Instead, she felt herself growing nervous and anxious about him, and this made her angry, not at herself, but at him. If she could only see him now she would

have a supreme nervous satisfaction in abusing him, less for what he had done to her, than for what he had permitted her to do to herself.

Finally, she could endure the silence and the uncertainty no longer. She picked up the hand 'phone and called his office. A clerk responded and she asked for Mr. Rudd.

"All right, I'll call him," said the clerk, who explained that he was Mr. Rudd's secretary, then asked, politely, "Who is this, please?"

"Mrs. Rudd." She was very indignant that she had to give her name, but her mood was not now one of evasion, and she was nervously and superbly impatient to hear his voice.

But, after a short pause, the secretary spoke. "Mr. Rudd is not in, just now!" he said.

She hung up the receiver with a bang. There was not the slightest doubt in her mind that Arthur was there, and had refused to speak to her. She was in a white heat of indignation. Mechanically, in a daze, she picked up a hand bag and thrust a few things in it. She went to her desk and took out her bank book. Then she thrust it back. No, she would take nothing from him. The jewels were her own, her very own. He could keep his money. She would have nothing from him—never, never again.

For, not only had he rebuffed her when she was in a forgiving mood, but he had done this

atrocious thing on her birthday. She would never see him again. So now she would leave the apartment forever!

CHAPTER IX

THE YOUNG BRIGADIER

THE woman suffrage organization which Constance, in her excitement, had joined the day before, held a lease of the entire eleventh floor of one of the newest great office buildings in that part of Fifth avenue where the fashionable homes have all but disappeared before the irresistible march of business. Some irony lay in the fact that on the site where a millionaire's wife had once held social levee, where receptions, balls and dinners had, for a third of a century, dominated the feminine life of the town the widow of a millionaire had now marshaled an army of women for a radically different purpose.

For it was the generosity of Mrs. Graydon, most illustrious of the recruits, that had given "the cause" this magnificent base of operations, and had thus permitted the political activities of women to flourish where once had flowered their social arts. Nowhere on the continent could the "advanced" woman be seen to better advantage.

By woman suffragists everywhere the pres-

ence of their headquarters in this strategic center, where the triumph of business over fashion seemed but a herald of the triumph of the political woman over the social woman, was hailed with extreme satisfaction. The newspapers and magazines had printed elaborate descriptions and photographs of the substantial and ornate new offices, which, in a few months, had become a marked feature of this city of wonders.

However, to the discomfiture of the owners of the building, which lacked nothing in location, or equipment, or construction, it was soon found that tenants, aside from those on the eleventh floor, were putting the acid test to their leases, from which they were striving to escape. One, to his huge delight, had revealed a defective plumbing which he had craftily permitted to destroy some of his furnishings and which thus, assisted by a resolute attorney, had enabled him to break his lease and move. Others were openly proclaiming that they would welcome a fire or an earthquake. Finally, a dozen of them joined in a request to the agent that at least one of the elevators might be designated, "For Men Only," and this request the agent had speedily granted, already fearful of the consequences if he did not solve this new problem which had not confronted any agent before.

There was little hope that the suffrage headquarters would move soon, for Mrs. Graydon, whose capacity for business had been fully demonstrated in one sensational divorce and two will contests, had placed the suffragists in possession of an iron-clad lease for five years, with an option for three years longer. The agent had chuckled over this, at first, for none of his tenants were held by leases longer than for three years, and the majority were for but a single year. The chuckle changed to dismay and then to despair when, toward the end of the first year, he began negotiations for the renewal of the other leases. Less than one-third would renew. Then he heard things, very definitely.

Three fashionable dentists were among his tenants. Not one would renew his lease, for the women patients, coming from conservative and wealthy families, had objected strenuously to finding themselves, at every visit, mistaken for suffragists. A celebrated attorney, practice chiefly in consultation, who had leased two-thirds of a floor, and who had come to this upper part of town because it was removed from the almost insane clatter of Wall street, found that he could never enter the elevator without being jammed in with a sweltering crowd of excited, gesticulating and jabbering women bound for the eleventh floor. Declaring

he would rather have a "thinking place" in the center of the stock exchange, before six months had passed, and without assigning any reason, he quietly handed the agent a check for the balance of his year's rent, and moved out; "flew away," as he bitterly remarked to a retired partner, "to a boiler factory—for peace!"

Several Semitic agents for various lines of women's wear occupied the lower floors and they were delighted. They laughingly contended that the activities of the eleventh floor and of the women who went there on the elevators brought a proper spirit to their trade. Competitors from downtown, who visited them, were usually struck dumb with envy by the spectacle of dozens of women in the elevators, all of whom, they assumed, must be buyers. But, by the close of the first year, these were the only tenants left, and they were the least desirable. In fact, in the beginning the agent had secretly hoped that he might, the second year, replace them with attorneys, dentists, physicians, and publishers. This hope had proven utterly vain. So long as the eleventh floor was under lease to Mrs. Graydon, "for purposes of female activity," as the attorney succinctly stated it, the other floors could be leased only to dealers in women's apparel. "Birds of a feather," said the attorney, waving a derisive hand at the cloak model emporium on

the second floor as he descended the elevator for the last time, wedged in among a group of howling women, one of whom stepped on his toes, while another all but lanced him with a rakish hatpin. He had absent-mindedly forgotten to take the "men only" elevator, but, as he stepped on the sidewalk, he heaved a sigh of vast relief and cast a final sarcastic glance at the magnificent structure which he had abandoned to its fate.

Of all this Constance was quite ignorant as she entered the building that beautiful spring morning, and, if she had known of it, her resolution doubtless would have been set more sternly. Her mood had been perfectly primed for her entrance to this center of revolt. Here, at the headquarters of the grand army of freedom, where flew the emblazoned flag of the triumphant woman's invasion, she came with the loyal and enthusiastic submission of a recruit already won to the cause.

For such as she this auspicious net had been spread. Already disaffected with her lot, this disaffection had been forced, partly by circumstance, partly by the restless and vehement life of the great city which distracted her, until like the zealot she was, she would follow, without question, the first standard promising freedom from her woes. And here was a standard raised with determined evidence of material

strength, with august proof of poised respectability! Could she do else than swear it utter allegiance?

Yet there was more to impel her to the action she was now about to take than the simple facts of her own history which have been briefly sketched. She was born to an age more cursed with fatuous organization than any other since time began; an age in which men, living under an oligarchy of commercial despots, yet flatter themselves by calling their government a democracy, and mask their futility of self-government under the organization of countless clubs, leagues, societies and associations in which, through the guise of pursuing various purposes of freedom and mutual help, they can, in reality, create only artificial barriers of caste in imitation of the real barriers that separate them from the aristocracy of the men of true power. It is, moreover, an age in which women, subtlest of flatterers, archest of imitators, only recently relieved from the drudgery of house-keeping and not yet enamored of its art, acquainted with the ease of childlessness and forgetful of the glory of motherhood, have been abandoned to a solution of their momentous and novel problems by the men who are quite consumed with their chase of material success and their fatuous imitations of the aristocracies of power. Is it not, then, inevitable that the

women should imitate the men's imitations, and that each individual, instead of relying on her own strength, her own wisdom, her own Heaven-sent intuition, should rush, man-like, into some "society" or "club" or "association" that may give her trifling weakness the pseudo-importance of a concerted movement?

Pitiful, indeed, is the situation of women in this age! Harassed by problems which every howling street-corner and every vacant press-pulpit tells her are "new" she has but one recourse, failing a God-given independence of soul, and that is to imitate! And all she has to imitate is man! Thus man, in his labyrinth of licensed and masquerading "societies," finding himself confronted by this queer problem of Woman Suffrage, is like the mediæval giant, Clion of Colonna, who found his fingers caught in the cleft of the oak which his vain strength had striven futilely to split!

For the nearly three years of her marriage Constance had been utterly absorbed in her home, her husband and her child. Thought of "joining" any movement had not come to her, for her life was full. Yet her husband's life was not so full. He belonged to two social clubs, one political club, a commercial organization and an athletic club. Her father, also, had belonged to several societies. As for herself she had never, but once, belonged to any or-

ganization. That was her college sorority, and the oath of allegiance she had taken to that had been, while she was at school, a sweet note of half-childish disaffection from the household gods which had been sufficient for her before she left her home. She had been loyal to the exaggerated oath she had taken when she joined the sorority, but when she was married the promise she made at the altar wiped out, in her simple and sincere mind, all allegiance she had vowed before.

Her loyal nature had not yet been corrupted by the giving of frequent oaths. She had not become "modern" enough to belong to so many things that she belonged to nothing. So, for nearly three years, she had belonged, body and soul, brain, heart and strength, to but one thing, and that one thing was the concrete idea of love embodied in the man who was her husband. Love had meant, first and for long, only her husband. She had expanded it sufficiently, and without feeling any distress, until it embodied also a home. Finally, with a burst of encompassing joy, it had flowered to include her child. So far it had been normal.

Now her simple, concentrated and loyal soul confronted a further expansion, and the trick of illusion that the age had played upon her, without her knowledge, without any course of instruction, without any definite education,

but by simple seepage, as the dirty waters of a sewer ooze through the decaying boards of a pure well, brought her to the whole-hearted belief that her new oath of allegiance must take precedence of all others. Aye! It must precede that oath she took at the altar even as that had preceded the childish oath of the sorority.

All she had heard and all she was to hear for days to come told her that a vague something embodied in the phrase "the enfranchisement of women," and which she was never able to more accurately define than with that phrase, was the thing of greatest importance in her life. It was the simple, almost inevitable destiny of her sterling nature, ignorant of life, asea in a chaos of undigested ideas. It was not her weakness, so much as her strength which brought her, embattled, to this standard.

Struggle with the unknown forces within herself she had already faced, alone, in the night. Further, more terrible struggle she was still to face. If the great modern woman movement was to do anything for her it was this;—to bring her, through stress and sacrifice, tears and toils, to womanhood. But by paths how different than she anticipated! How different from the paths her mother and her grandmother had trod to become a woman no less fine, no less strong and true!

As she entered the offices of the eleventh floor of the great building on Fifth avenue that bright morning these deep realities were hardly in her consciousness. She had but a single thought—to reach her child without humbling herself. Alarmed at what Miss Rivers had told her, and guilelessly accepting it as gospel, without further question, she felt that she must seek this powerful organization for assistance, and yet she was too proud to openly ask for the assistance she craved. Therefore, what could be more natural than that she should offer, rather than ask?

She entered a long hall, from which opened many doors. Thick, luxurious rugs were on the floor of the hall. Some doors were open and, beyond, she could see massive mahogany furniture, with women sitting at desks, women sitting before typewriters, women standing, talking, gesticulating.

Miss Rivers, evidently on the watch, came forth from one door and guided her to another on which she read the word: "Membership." With the air of a temple intimate the bachelor woman opened the door, and hustled within. The courtesy she had shown in her own apartment was now gone. She had suddenly assumed that air of ownership, of subtle patronage that had vaguely estranged Constance the day before. And, just as she had left her

friend in the wings of the theater for a minute, while she constituted herself an advance guard of attack and information, she now left the younger woman and disappeared in an inner office. Soon her voice rang out, calling:

"Mrs. Rudd!"

Constance followed and entered the inner office, where she confronted Miss Hunter, stoutly buttressed behind a flat top mahogany desk and guarded by a stenographer. "Miss Rivers tells me," said the buxom and radiating secretary, with one of her most ingratiating smiles, "that you wish to become an active member, Mrs. Rudd."

Constance clutched her pocketbook firmly, anticipating what might be coming, but bravely unwilling, as yet, to reveal her pecuniary condition. "That is true," she assented.

"Fine!" exclaimed Miss Hunter, taking a roll of papers from a drawer in the desk and hastily looking over it, "I will see that you are enrolled immediately. It will take a few days for the Board of Directors to act on your name, but I am sure you will be admitted. The fee, annually, for active members, is ten dollars."

Constance clutched faintly at her purse, fully aware that it did not contain the requisite ten dollars, and her heart sinking, with humiliation.

"Oh! Never mind about it now," said Miss

Hunter, lightly noting the look, "You had better wait until your name is passed upon. It is merely a formality, but so is the payment of the fee. You need not pay that until you get ready; any time within six months, will do."

Constance heaved a sigh of vast relief, and managed to stammer, to hide her confusion; "But I would like to go to work immediately."

"To be sure. To be sure. You are already one of us. I wish to assure you positively of *that*." Miss Hunter looked at Miss Rivers, who conveyed to her a meaning glance, and Constance looked at them both humbly.

"But—but—" said Constance, "I want to do something—*do* something."

"Well," replied Miss Hunter, "We are sending a private train to Albany tomorrow to appear before the legislature, and we want to take as many real suffragists along as possible. Would you like to go?"

Constance hesitated. The word "to-morrow" was too vague for her present mood, but she said, "Yes," and quickly added; "Do you mean that it is for Congress that you are going—to see about the laws for women?"

Miss Hunter concealed her smile, quite effectually, and answered kindly. "Not Congress, my dear. The legislature is at Albany, and we must get the law through there, first."

"Oh!"

"But I think we will win at Albany to-morrow!"

"Do you?" asked Constance, with almost fierce alacrity. She imagined that instantly that atrocious situation which Miss Rivers had outlined, the awful law which gave her husband the right to strike her and keep her child, would be changed, and she became almost giddy with delight, which she did not show, however.

"We are almost certain of it, and we want to make sure by carrying a great delegation up there. We want women like you, Mrs. Rudd, to show those legislators—most of them are just low *politicians*—that the very *best* women want suffrage."

Constance blushed at the compliment, much to her chagrin, for she had no idea that she was rather an unusual specimen to be gathered into the rebellious fold. Another thought, however, disturbed her. What would she do until the morrow? Besides, it might be a day or two until the laws could be passed; she knew that much, at least, about congresses, or legislatures, whichever it was. So she asked:

"But couldn't I do something to-day?"

Miss Hunter's face became more radiant than ever. She slapped her thigh vigorously, with the aplomb of a man. "By all means!" she exclaimed, "I have just the thing." Her use of the personal pronoun was as unconscious

and as possessive as it is with the under clerks in stores who tell their customers that "*I have*" so and so. She picked up her pen, drew some paper before her and wrote a note, which she handed to Constance.

"There is a letter of introduction to Ruth Vance," she said, "Vance needs a lot of help, and she needs it bad. The police are troubling her a lot down there, and she needs good pickets, the sort of women who will stand their ground, whom the police will not *dare* run in, and whom, if they do, will get us good notices in the papers."

Again Constance winced at the familiarity of the expressions, but the utterance of one name was paramount to her. "Ruth Vance!" she exclaimed, "The leader of the undergarment makers?"

"Certainly! You'll like her. You look like her, except that you probably have had a good many advantages she has not had—"

"Me—I look like—Ruth Vance?" stammered Constance whose modest idea of her own importance was at the pole opposite from her estimate of the importance of the vital young striker.

"I think so," smiled the radiant Miss Hunter, "You go down there—the address is on the envelope—and get acquainted. She will probably make you her brigadier. She needs one."

With a murmured "thank you" Constance left. Brigadier? She was promptly angry when she reflected that she had instinctively said to herself that she must ask Arthur what "brigadier" meant.

CHAPTER X

BREVETTED

WITH the letter in her hand Constance reached the street, still uncertain what she should do. To her great relief Miss Rivers had stayed behind in Miss Hunter's office, and now she was strongly tempted to get on a bus which would take her within a few steps of her own door. She had been away from home now for more than twenty-four hours, and nostalgia was strong within her. Once she stepped forward to hail a bus, but, at that moment a big, blue, noiseless motor car slipped up beside her, came to an easy stop, and from it alighted two women who fascinated her. They stepped out briskly and entered the building she had just left. As they crossed the walk she was uplifted by an air of dominant assurance which radiated from them, and she was quick to recognize Mrs. Graydon and Amy Dart.

Again her spirit of defiance was quickened. Was she never to be permitted to forget that ever present authority of women who *knew* their rights? At every turn of the road it

seemed to stand there before her with a righteous appeal. At each moment when she had wavered, every time when the weakness of longing for her child threatened to turn her back to that morass of woman's sphere where she had suffered and groped in vain, there had sprung up before her some tangible evidence of the strength of women. Now it was bright morning; she was refreshed with a night's sleep; and the *evidence* of women's power was so complete—the imposing office in the substantial building, the sleek motor car with its determined women, the very letter she held in her hand—that it carried her up out of her weakness like a diapason of mighty music. She would struggle no longer. It was her destiny.

For a moment she stood there, wondering if she had not better go back to the offices. There were a few questions she would like to ask. Was it true about that law which gives husbands the right to strike their wives? And would the Congress or, whatever it was, at Albany repeal it on the morrow? From all that had happened to her and all that she had heard she clung to these two statements tenaciously. She concluded, however, that if she went back she would only exhibit an ignorance of which she felt ashamed. Moreover, she had no desire to intrude on such eminent women as Mrs. Graydon and Amy Dart, those august persons, unsel-

fishly dedicated to a great cause and on whom she would not care to inflict her own small woes.

So, she hesitated no longer, but spoke to a policeman on the corner, showed him the envelope and inquired the way to the address it contained. He directed her over to the Fourth avenue car and told her how to transfer to get to her destination.

The ride occupied half an hour and took her into a part of town she had never seen by daylight. Only once before had she been below Fourteenth street and that was one night when she had gone with Arthur and a party of friends to a queer restaurant, just for the "experience." Then she had been grateful that she was not alone in penetrating that jungle. Now she was quickened for the adventure and remembered that vague other self with loathing.

The address called for Clinton Hall, and when she got within four blocks of the place she knew she was on the right road, for the sidewalks were alive with girls such as she had seen the day before at the mass meeting; Jewish, Italian, Polish, Roumanian and Syrian girls; some pretty with wistful eyes, most of them thick featured; all poorly dressed, all with a hunted and ignorant manner.

They looked at her as she passed, some with curiosity, most of them with resentment. She overlooked the curiosity; she failed to note the

resentment. Her heart went out to them. She cared little what their trouble might be; that it was trouble she could help was her only concern.

She was surprised to find policemen not only at every street corner, but half way down each block. They made her progress easy, for she was obliged to enquire her way frequently. She noted that the girls who were lingering along the street gave them a wide berth. Once she saw a policeman wave his stick at two girls and yell something she preferred not to hear, whereupon the girls darted down a side street. She approached this policeman with her envelope, asking the way, and was surprised to find that he was most polite. This incensed her. Why should he be polite to her, and not to the others?

At length she found Clinton Hall. Surging in and out through its doors was a crowd of girls jabbering in queer foreign languages she could not understand, gesticulating, arguing, protesting. Inside she was directed to a room at the rear, and there, surrounded by a number of girls, she saw Ruth Vance.

But there was no crowding, no wild talking, no gesticulating here. Perfect order prevailed. Girls came up evidently tamed as soon as they reached a radius of twenty feet from the room, quietly passed within, spoke in a low voice, were

answered in firm, quick tones and departed speedily, calm and determined, only to lose the calm as soon as they again reached that seething atmosphere of polyglot confusion in the outer hall and on the street.

That room was like a quiet eddy in the rapids of a mighty river, where water remained for a moment to rest from its torment. Constance entered and without a word passed her letter to the militant young woman she had heard speak the day before. As a matter of fact she was too impressed with the importance of the occasion to speak, but her manner concealed any trepidation she might have felt and the glorious Vance interpreted her directness as a marvel of militancy. She glanced hurriedly at the letter, dropped it impatiently to a table, reached forth her hand vigorously and exclaimed;

"Mrs. Rudd, I am delighted to meet you. You are in the nick of time."

"Thank you," said Constance, elated.

"Miss Hunter says you want to help us down here."

"Indeed, I do. If you will only tell me how."

Miss Vance laughed. "There's just one thing to do," she replied, "And that is help keep the police off our backs while we settle this strike."

"But—but—"

Another hearty laugh from the militant and

confidant Vance. "No 'buts,'" she cried, "You've no idea what a help you can be."

"Really—do you think so?"

"No doubt about it. The cops stand under for anyone like you."

Constance thought this might be sarcasm. "I wonder—" she ventured.

"I guess yes. They're a bit afraid of you uptown women. They can't ever tell when they'll strike a real tartar with pull. They haven't forgotten how Mrs. Gilfadden got the buttons off one of them last week and they don't monkey with swells—pardon me, Mrs. Rudd; no offense, I'm sure." Constance was too much under the spell of her memory of the day before to have taken offense at much worse, even, than being called inferentially a "swell"; moreover, the dazzling Vance smile was beaming on her and she felt warmed through and through by it.

"When do you want to begin?" asked Miss Vance.

"Right away."

"Very well, then. What we're trying to do is to keep scab girls away from the shops—"

"*Scab* girls!"

Miss Vance laughed. "They're usually scabs in more ways than one," she answered, "A scab's a girl that don't belong to the union. There's a lot of them coming to-day and we've

got pickets out all up and down these five streets here to catch them as they come in and put them wise to what they're up against. Of course, you know we're not supposed to do any violence, and the police are here to prevent it, but you can see that to hold out against the bosses we've simply got to keep the scabs out of the shops. Now your job is to take up the attention of the police whenever you see anything going on—"

"Going on? Where?"

Miss Vance winked broadly and chuckled. "Well, if you see a couple of girls edging another off the walk or up an alley, and a cop turns up; that's when you get busy."

"How?"

"Oh! You know how. Anyway. Talk to the cop. Argue; plead; threaten; anything's fair. That's up to you. Choose your own weapons. The point is to keep the coast clear for our pickets. They've *got* to have a chance."

"I—I see," said Constance, wondering to herself if she really did see, but quickly reassured by the vehement and explicit Vance, who added;

"Houston Street'll be your territory. It's been quiet there this morning, but there may be something doing this afternoon. We have thirty-two pickets in that street, on four blocks, and you'll be the brigadier—"

"What is a brigadier?" asked Constance,

feeling the moment she had asked the question that she had revealed her ignorance, but somehow her awe of Ruth Vance was disappearing on close contact.

Miss Vance laughed again. "They call me the Undergarment Makers Major General," she explained, "And you see I need brigadiers—commanders of brigades—Mrs. Gilfadden was my first and Miss Miller the second. Now you're the third brigadier. You see, it takes quality to get a command down here on the east side. But you mustn't be annoyed if the reporters call you a 'cop-decoy.' That's what they called Mrs. Gilfadden and Miss Miller."

Constance straightened and pouted, mischievously. "I'm not down here to be annoyed, but to annoy," she said.

Both laughed and Miss Vance placed her hand firmly on Constance's shoulder and said, sternly; "That's it, precisely, and I brevet you my third brigadier. Go you forth now to battle!"

Constance lacked the temerity to ask what "brevet" might mean, but she felt confident she could *guess* that much. She stood up stiffly, answered the stern glance with another just as stern, and gave a stiff little military salute. "Very well, General," she said, "I obey!"

Again both laughed, like school girls in a

prank, and then Constance marched away, with a stiff little military stride. She felt almost as if she were back in college, preparing for some exceedingly difficult and therefore very fascinating senior jinks.

Out on Houston Street she found the new game indeed fascinating. On each corner was a policeman and there was one in the middle of each block. Loafing along on both sides of the street, apparently with nothing to do, and yet keeping careful eyes on the policemen, were girls; young, old; pretty, ugly; Italian mostly, but also Yiddish, Roumanian, Polish, Syrian, occasionally a German.

For a long time nothing happened. Then Constance saw a group of three girls coming toward her, on the opposite side of the street, three blocks off. They walked in a determined, half-suspicious manner, that immediately interested her, for, instead of appearing afraid of the policemen, they seemed to seek protection under the blue coats of the law.

When the three reached the alley across from where Constance stood five girls stepped out and surrounded them, and instantly there ensued a wildly excited talk among the eight. At the moment only one policeman was in sight and he was on the corner, with his back turned. Constance, suddenly alive with her opportunities, and instinctively perceiving what to do,

walked briskly toward the policeman. He, paying no attention to her, walked toward the group of struggling girls, for it now appeared that the three were being set upon by the five. He was half the distance to them when Constance walked up to him, in a simulated flutter.

"Oh! Officer!" she exclaimed, and appeared on the verge of crying, "I've lost my way. Tell me, where is Broadway?"

The appearance of this woman so evidently out of her element on Houston Street diverted the policeman for a moment and he stopped to point out the way for her, noting, as he did so, the trim set of her well-cut skirt and the modish curve of her hat. Meanwhile the vigilant pickets had succeeded in pushing the three scabs into the alley. He heard the screams of the three as they disappeared, and started to run after them to give the protection for which he had been detailed that morning.

"Officer! Officer!" screamed Constance behind him.

He turned and found her running after him. Seeing who it was he turned again, with an oath this time, to the work cut out in the alley, but, before he could proceed more than a few steps, his sleeve was plucked, and Constance confronted him, in apparent alarm:

"Officer!" she exclaimed, out of breath, and her eyes wide, apparently with fear, "I'm afraid

to go to Broadway alone. Can't you come with me?"

He pointed with his stick indignantly the way he had previously shown. "It's broad day light. Nothin'll harm th' likes o' you," he said and started again for the alley, whence the cries were growing more distant but none the less piteous.

"Oh! I'm afraid! I'm afraid!" screamed Constance, "There are so many queer things down here. I'm afraid! Won't you come with me—please?"

"Jist a minit, mum," he said, kindly, and shook her off, while he ran to the head of the alley. She followed him, surreptitiously, and saw that the pickets had had time to dispose of the troublesome scabs. There was no one in sight but the blue-coated policeman. She felt a glow of triumph at this first victory for her abused sisters, and barely managed to conceal her elation from the policeman as he came back from his unsuccessful jaunt.

"Thim divils!" he exclaimed, joining her, while she sympathized with his troubles, "they're wors'n byes. Give me a passel o' kids, anytime, rather'n thim Wop girls! Wow!" He mopped his brow. "Now, Miss," he added, courteously, "What kin I do fer you?"

She told him she was afraid to walk toward

Broadway alone and he started to accompany her, but, by the time they reached the end of the block, she thanked him, demurely, and said she thought she could go the rest of the way alone.

Twice in the next hour she repeated similar experiments on other policemen in other blocks, until, as she passed, the pickets greeted her with admiring eyes and whispered comments. Finally the afternoon was growing late and she was about to seek Clinton Hall again and look for Ruth Vance, when she heard a commotion at the mouth of the very alley where had occurred her first escapade. At the same moment she saw a policeman running toward the alley where a group of excited pickets were "railroading" a "scab" or, possibly, two.

Constance rushed for the policeman like a pointer for a bird. She caught him half way down the block and pulled at his sleeve while he was still a hundred yards from the almost victorious pickets.

"Officer! Officer!" she panted.

He stopped and looked at her, at first deceived by the note of alarm in her voice. Then he recognized her.

"By my grandad's shillelah!" he exclaimed, seizing her by the arm, "I'm wise to this frame-up now."

This time she did not need to feign fright.

"Why! Why!" she exclaimed.

"Don't 'why' me," he answered, roughly, and holding her so tightly she almost cried out with the pain, "I'll let thim Wops go an' pinch you—that's 'why'—you cop-decoys 've been loose long enough around here."

A tear appeared in her eye and he relented. Just as he loosened her arm a cheery voice cried out, from the middle of the street; "Just six inches to the left, Mike! There! That's it! Hold it now! Done! Thanks!"

The policeman looked around with a good-natured grin and called, "Howdy, Lank!" to a long, dusty, slattern looking individual with a graflex camera.

"Much obliged, Mike," returned the photographer, "Another decoy—eh?"

"Sure thing. Goin' to publish her tu-morrer!"

"You bet. They're hot stuff now. Good-by! I've got to hurry." He disappeared down a side street.

Constance looked at the policeman who stood grinning at her. "Yes, Miss," he answered to her unspoken question, "That's a ray-porter for the Blade, an' he's got yer mug fer th' decoy gallery, all right—all right!" He chuckled, enjoying the joke, hugely.

Constance, vaguely, but terribly alarmed, asked; "Do you mean he would publish my picture in the paper?"

"Betcherlife!"

"He don't know my name."

"Don't need any name. Every officer in the precinct 'll know yer mug to-morrer—that's all we want."

The rough, kindly officer passed on, twirling his stick, looking suspiciously at a group of pickets in the next block, while Constance stood there, crushed. It was getting along towards evening, anyway, and now it seemed as if every desire to fight for any woman's rights, especially her own, had passed from her.

As she stood there, miserable, the cheery voice of Ruth Vance sounded to her from across the street.

"Come on!" cried the major general, "It's time for supper!"

Constance hastened across to her newest friend. "I'm a horrible failure!" she exclaimed.

"On the contrary," replied Miss Vance, grasping her affectionately by the arm, "You're the best brigadier I've got. You helped the pickets corral seven scabs this afternoon."

CHAPTER XI

JOHN STRANGE

They walked a few blocks to Tanti's, an Italian restaurant, not one patronized by tourists or apartment dwellers, but by Italians. The mammoth signorina, who kept the accounts at the desk by the door, nodded generously to Ruth as the two entered.

Once seated at a large table in the rear Miss Vance, after a word of gay salutation in Italian to the waiter, turned to her new brigadier.

"My name is Ruth Vance," she said, "What is yours?"

"Mrs. Arthur Rudd."

"I mean *your* name."

"My maiden name?"

"No. Your name—your regular name."

"Constance—Constance Rudd."

"Very well, then, I'm going to call you Constance, if you don't mind. We don't 'Mrs.' or 'Miss' anybody down here. If I get to calling you 'Rudd' or 'Ruddy' I hope you won't mind. It's only my way."

Constance was surprised to find that she was

not so much offended at this quick familiarity as she had been the day before with Miss Rivers, whose words had been more restrained, while her manner had been more insinuating. "I won't mind," she answered, laughing, and beginning her soup which had just arrived.

Both were busy with their food for a few minutes. To Constance the hearty, well-cooked meal was very welcome. She was picking the leg of a fowl when a question suddenly sent the blushes through her.

"Where's Rudd?" asked Ruth.

Constance dropped the bone, in consternation. Then she smiled. "Home, I guess," she said, but her heart smote her cruelly, for accepting such a reference to Arthur, without the "Mr."

"Divorced?"

"No."

"Just separated?"

"Yes."

The questions were so cruelly blunt that she had no time to evade them and she was astonished to find herself willing to admit to another, and that other a stranger, what she had so far tried to conceal from herself. Yet, she told herself, it was foolish to try to conceal the situation any longer. She might as well make a bold face of it.

"That's the right way. I believe in that," Ruth persisted. "If a woman does make the

mistake of marriage she is usually foolish enough to give a man his liberty again as soon as she learns her mistake. Then he goes off and ties down some other woman. I've always said that if I ever got married I'd never be divorced, but that if I got tired of my husband I'd just shift for myself, *and keep him tied!* It's about the only chance a woman has to get even. Marriage is all a one-sided game. Men always get the best of it. A man ties a woman up to him by marriage, but is he tied? Never. He does as he pleases; has other women; votes; goes anywhere and everywhere he wants to."

"Don't you intend to marry, *at all?*"

"Certainly not. Don't believe in it. It's a relic of barbarism. The word 'marriage' is simply a polite substitution for the word 'slavery.' In the old days men owned women; now they marry them; in the future they will do neither one nor the other."

"But you can't prevent *love*."

"Love! That's a very different thing from marriage, which usually kills love. Look here, love is the grandest, freest, most glorious thing in the world. What happens to a free, glorious thing when it is tied? Doesn't it languish and then die? Love always dies in marriage. Don't tell me! I've seen too many of them. The one way to kill love is to marry. Take an eagle—free, glorious bird—and tie it up and it

lives only half as long as it does when vain, foolish people do not try to *tame* it! You can't tame an eagle; you can't tame love. Its very nature is freedom; tame it and you kill it!"

Constance was shocked and fascinated. After a pause she asked, timidly; "Is that what women would do if they voted—do away with marriage?"

Ruth looked at her, with a sardonic smile on her lips. "It's almost too much to hope for—at once," she said.

"But is that what you mean by woman suffrage?"

Ruth looked around the room, as if fearful she might be overheard, then leaned nearer, and spoke in a low, intense tone: "We must not let people think we are after such laws as that," she said, "In fact, it is nobody's business to know what we will do with the vote when we get it. It is our right to have it and we are going to have it, but—"

"Do you think it even possible to abolish marriage?"

"Perhaps. Perhaps. It will be if I am ever in a position to abolish it, though most women are still so lazy and satisfied with the old ways, just as the slaves were before the Civil War, that they may have to wait a long time before enough of them are ready to step out and *de-*

mand freedom. But I believe it is coming, eventually—indeed, I do.”

Constance shook her head, gravely. “No,” she said, “I do not believe that you can abolish marriage.”

Ruth smiled a superior smile. “Wait until you have had your freedom a while,” she answered, “then you will see it is the only way.”

“But, even if I myself have been unhappy, many other women are happy in marriage.”

“Many less than you think.”

“I wonder.”

“No doubt of it. Women are the greatest liars in the world for just one reason—they have been obliged for ages to put a smiling face on marriage.”

“How about men?”

“They don’t pretend—don’t have to. When they’re unhappy at home they find plenty to interest and amuse them outside, but the wife has to sit and make the best of it. A perfect school for hypocrites. I, for one, intend to act my life right out, ‘like a man,’ until the time comes when the world is no longer able to say that directness and honesty are ‘like a man!’ ”

“I always have resented *that*,” commented Constance, soberly considering all that this new, wonderfully active companion was saying to her.

“What a sneer there is in it!” continued

Ruth, "every time that expression is used any woman who hears it ought to rise and strike the person who utters it, man or woman. It is the badge of scorn they have placed on our sex for ages."

"But you used it yourself just now."

"In quotation marks, if you please."

"Then I shall be careful to use quotation marks whenever I am near you—if I use any queer expressions." They both laughed at this, and Ruth asked;

"How long since?"

"Since what?"

"Since you left your husband?"

Constance hesitated. So many times in the last two days she had been ashamed of her lack of experience, her ignorance, her palpable *newness*. Inside, in her spirit, she felt the equal of any of these women now. She had gone through *so much* surely she was a person of vast experience. Yet she was thoroughly conscious of the fact that when she confessed that she had been an "advanced woman" only forty-eight hours she was bound to fall somewhat in the scale of importance among her comrades. So now she answered:

"Not very long," which, while non-committal, was not incriminating.

"Oh!" said Ruth, but returned to the attack by asking, "And are you living alone?"

"Well—yes."

"Ah! Uptown, I suppose."

"Well—I—I'm without a place to stay just now. I thought I'd go to a hotel to-night."

"A hotel? Why do that?"

"Because it's the easiest thing to do."

"Not at all."

"I know nothing easier."

While this conversation was in progress Ruth had been devouring her companion, shrewdly observing every detail of her hat, enviously noting the perfect fit of the tailored gown, and striving, as well as she could, to observe the difference between the two shades of tan in her boots. When they sat down she had assisted Constance to remove her coat, and had not lost the opportunity to look at the name of the tailor sewn conspicuously in the neckband. It was Keiger's mark, and she well knew that Keiger made no suit under a hundred and twenty-five dollars, while she reflected fiercely, that she had never been able to afford more than thirty dollars for a single suit in all her life.

Now Ruth beamed on Constance. "Why, the easiest thing in the world for you to do," she said, "is to come and stay with me. I've got a bit of a flat not far from here. There's nothing grand about it, but it's cozy, and you're welcome."

Constance found it difficult to believe herself worthy of this good fortune. What was it that drew these women to her? Was it the wistfulness which she contrived to keep from her words but could not keep from her manner? Was it her modest and refined prettiness? Or was it that indefinable air dominated by *taste*, which no woman can imitate, but which no woman who recognizes can fail to envy?

"I'm afraid that wouldn't do," said Constance.

"Why not?"

"I'd break in on your little habits."

"That's what habits are for—to be broken up. I'm one who believes in change, progress. If I can open my heart to a new friend I become that much bigger, and what are habits in the face of growth?"

"But I'd have to pay—"

"Oh! You can stand your share, all right. It'll be Dutch treat, certainly."

Thus it was arranged that Constance should stay the night, at least, and perhaps the week with Ruth Vance. While they were talking, and as their coffee was served a man came to their table. Ruth saw him when he entered the door and beckoned. He sat down, without ceremony, looking at Constance with a quick, shrewd glance.

"John, this is Constance Rudd. Constance, this is John Strange."

They shook hands, and the newcomer began at once talking with Ruth. As he talked Constance could not fail to note that his mannerisms were the same as Ruth's, that a peculiar little intonation he possessed was the same as Ruth's, and that even his way of speaking was the same as Ruth's. She could not help wondering if he were not paying her new friend the compliment of imitation. It never occurred to her that Ruth might be imitating him.

The talk was all of the strike. Strange had been spending the afternoon with a committee from the employers, and he was downcast over the prospect; there seemed little hope of an immediate settlement of the strike. It developed that he himself had been, long before, a cutter in a wholesale tailoring establishment, but that for several years he had devoted himself to the problem of uniting the bushelmen in a solid organization.

"He's the tailor's walking delegate," said Ruth, laughing.

Strange resented this. "No, I'm not. I don't walk," he protested, "I do it all by correspondence. I'm the secretary of the Federation of Protected Bushelmen."

Ruth patted his hand, to show that she had purposely had her little say so that he might

utter his whole title, which evidently gave him some satisfaction. He turned over his hand and caught hers, and Constance could not fail to see that Ruth's eyes dilated and that her breath was drawn more deeply. Strange, however, seemed to suffer no change of feeling, nor any sense of modesty, either. He fondled Ruth's hand, with an affection that was more than comradely, while he let his eyes wander over Constance.

Those eyes had lashes longer than any man has a right to own. Otherwise the face of John Strange was masculine. He had a good chin and his mouth, while large and not weak, was still not quite firm enough to please Constance. She had always said that it was the way Arthur shut his lips which first made her love him. Arthur! Love! How ridiculous! All that was far behind her, and now no man could be more than an interesting type.

Meanwhile Strange was mentally comparing the two young women who sat before him. He was astonished to find how like they were. They were of the same age, the same height, the same general build. Ruth, however, had russet hair, while Constance's was deep brown. Strange had a tow head, and his eyes rested caressingly on Constance's soft brown hair.

And as he went on he found more points of similarity, but with the shade of difference al-

ways in favor of the newcomer. Ruth's ears were well-shaped, but they were not small, dainty and exquisite as were Constance's. Ruth's eyes were brilliant, but they were not melting, confident and tender like Constance's. And Ruth's mouth was full and firm, while Constance's had that sweet, wistful, mellow curve of confiding trustfulness, the sort of mouth which causes a strong man to lose all his strength; a mouth which, pitifully forlorn, was yet the most appealing and fascinating episode in a face all feminine.

Ruth seemed to divine the comparison being made in the silent head of John Strange, and she withdrew her hand from his suddenly, with a petulant twist. He made no effort to regain it, and appeared to ignore her mood. Instead, he sat looking at Constance, with a gaze not rude, although it was decidedly frank. All his movements were slow and angular, with a hidden force, and somehow Constance already instinctively disliked him. Before she could say or do anything Ruth had risen abruptly.

"Come!" exclaimed the Major General; "It's time for us to be going, Constance."

"What!" exclaimed Strange, "aren't you going to wait and have dinner with me?"

"We've had our dinner, thank you."

"Then I'll come over to the house after I've had mine."

“Very well, only don’t be too late. I’m tired,” said Ruth, and passed out, followed by Constance.

CHAPTER XII

FACING FACTS

RUTH VANCE lived in a four-room flat. One room was cut off to make a kitchenette, another was cut off to make a bath, a hall cut in to the third. Thus only the fourth was of the full size of ten by eleven. It was in the corner of the building, had windows on two sides and was used for a sitting room. It possessed a couch which could be made into a bed, and here Constance slept that night.

She had hardly retired when she thought she heard a key turn in the outer lock, and a heavy step cross the floor of the neighboring room. She heard nothing further and became satisfied that Ruth had gone out for something and then had returned. Soon she slept.

The next morning she went with Ruth to Tanti's for her breakfast. Unlike Miss Rivers, Ruth Vance was a hit-or-miss housekeeper. She merely threw the beds together when she got up, not pausing to air or tuck or smooth. In her kitchenette stood dishes three days unwashed. As for the sweeping she did not pre-

tend to do it more than once a week, and the performance seldom lived up to the pretence. She laughed at all this as she went out with Constance, saying lightly:

"When a woman has vital things to do in the world she can't be diverted by petty details. Men aren't. The time will come when all housework will be done by persons appointed by the state. Then those gifted for higher things will not be bothered."

Remembering the glorious Vance of the platform and the executive Vance of the strike headquarters Constance was inclined to condone the lapses in Vance the housekeeper. Moreover, these constant reference of all difficulties to "the state" lulled any doubts she might have had. With the zeal of a new convert she had accepted everything on faith, and questioned no promises, inspected no inconsistencies.

But when she had paid for her breakfast she found she had left in her purse only a quarter, and she clutched at the pendant that lay against her bosom. All her life she had heard certain vague references to pawnshops, which had always seemed to her places of disgrace. Now her time had come and she tried not to wince.

As they stepped out of the restaurant she saw three gilded balls across the street, over a win-

dow protected by steel bars. She told Ruth that she had a business errand to accomplish before reporting at Clinton Hall, and they parted at the corner, with an admonition from Ruth to "hurry—there is work to-day!"

Constance passed around a block, so as to give Ruth a chance to get out of sight, before she darted in under the three balls, with a sick fear at her heart, as if she were hunted. She reached in her bosom, swiftly unfastened the chain, and dropped on the dingy showcase the glittering ruby with its encircling pearls.

A little old Jew, frowning, picked up the pendant, and looked at it with a sneer.

"How much?" he asked.

A cold fear passed over her. What if the jewels were not as valuable as she had always supposed? She had heard of such things. With the quick sinking of the heart of an honest, inexperienced woman she thought his professional skepticism due to some instant detection of attempted fraud. She leaned against the case for support.

"I don't want to sell it," she protested.

"Ah! How much you want to borrow?"

"What will you let me have?"

"What you want? Don't you know what you want?" This savagely.

"All I can get," she timidly answered; for the Jew's manner was forbidding.

"Huh! How much? You know how much, don't you?"

When she went in she had intended to ask for \$200. At the first question she had decided that all she could get from so tiny a place was \$100. Then she had hoped he would offer \$75.

"How much? How much!" he demanded, brutally.

"Fifty dollars," she said in a weak voice.

He took the jewel to the window, screwed a protruding glass in his eye and examined it closely, turning it over so the light could strike it from every angle. He came back and tossed it on the case where she had laid it, with a contemptuous sneer.

"Tirty-five—not a cent more," he said, and started to arrange some watches in the case below, as if he had no further interest in her or her pendant. From his manner she gained the impression that he was doing her a great favor in not calling for the police. For a moment she clutched the pendant fiercely, then relaxed it, and said, in a weak, pleading tone:

"All right—please!"

He snatched it eagerly and disappeared behind a tall steel cage in the rear of the shop, whence he presently emerged to ask her name and address and to make out a ticket. At length, he grudgingly handed over to her three

soiled tens and five dirty one dollar bills, and she slunk from the place.

As soon as she was in the street she almost ran for several blocks. This was the end, she told herself. She could endure the struggle no longer. She would go right to Arthur's office, tell him all she had done and plead for forgiveness. She wanted the pendant back; it was, next to her engagement ring, her dearest possession. To that end she hastened toward Broadway, as she thought. But, after she had gone for a few blocks, she found herself in the midst of tenements and a short distance on she saw the river, so she knew she had gone in the wrong direction. She crossed up another street, so as to get away from the pawnshop on her return, and started back the other way.

In ten minutes she saw Clinton Hall. By this time her brisk walking had restored much of her strength, she had safely placed the bills in her purse, and she had had time to reflect and to regain her dignity.

After all, she told herself, a pawnshop was not a place of disgrace, but a house of misfortune. Men borrowed money in business and thought nothing of it; why shouldn't women borrow money? Certainly money was a necessary thing, and now that she had neither father nor husband to seek she must be a business woman

and learn to earn money. This was a new problem. She must solve it.

Meanwhile she would not run back to Arthur and so lose every *right* she had. No. She would make him come to her. Then she suddenly remembered that he did not know where she was. She laughed at herself when she reflected that for two days she had been expecting him to come and seek her out. Now she realized how absurd this was. New York is a large city. He would have trouble in finding her, though she had imagined that, with his *cleverness*, he would certainly have tracked her before this. Had he not quickly traced the servant girl who had run away the year before, and had she not plainly told him that last night she had spent in the apartment with him that she would leave him and become a suffragist?

In this way she restored her confidence and argued herself into a frame of mind whereby she could place the blame on Arthur for not finding her. And here was Clinton Hall before her, and there her *duty* lay! Had she not taken up this woman's burden? And was it right for her to lay it down?

At the same time she made up her mind that if Arthur did not communicate with her that day she would, the following day, let him know, perhaps by telephone, perhaps by postal, where she was, and then let *him* make some move. At

this thought her heart leaped up joyously and hope of seeing Bobby again soon lay upon her like a benediction.

So she passed into Clinton Hall and to the rear room where Ruth Vance, at her desk, was dispatching the morning's business. "Hello, sister!" she cried, on seeing Constance, "I was beginning to fear we had lost you. Look here! You've come across the first day!"

Ruth held out a copy of the *Morning Blade* and, on the front page, Constance saw her picture. She examined the paper closely. There she was, in the grip of the policeman, her hat a little awry. Underneath was the caption—"A COP-DECOY."

In vain she looked for her name. It was not there. This pleased her, and her first alarm at Ruth's announcement was quickly succeeded by a secret delight. *Arthur would see the picture!* He alone perhaps would recognize it. Now there was no excuse for writing, and she could maintain her dignity, above all, her *rights!* Of course he would come right down there where she was and labor with her; she would stoutly maintain her position; he would plead, he would argue, but, in the end, he would let her have Bobby; of that she was certain; she would insist on that. And, she *might* go back with him; that would depend on how he behaved toward her.

So she welcomed the work Ruth Vance gave her for the second day, which was to repeat what she had done the first, only on the street below Houston, so the same policemen would not be on guard and she would thus have a better opportunity of exerting the wholesome influence of her up-town manner and her modest dressing.

"You'll be good for three days at that - until you exhaust the territory," said Kalia, laughing, as Constance went out to her work. "Then we'll promote you - unless you're worn out by that time, which is not unlikely."

[illegible]

1. The first step is to identify the problem or goal. This involves understanding the current situation and what needs to be achieved.

athletic build, smooth-shaven face, determined manner, and flashing eyes. Of course his eyes would flash if he came. Would he not be angry? She expected that, and she would welcome it, but he did not come.

Again, at dusk, she heard Ruth Vance call, and looked across the street to discover her with John Strange. Ruth said it was supper time, and she went with them to Tanti's again. As they met, Strange had taken her hand in his and she had been repelled by the touch of his palm, although she told Ruth later, alone, that she admired the man's earnestness.

Strange sat between them at the round table in the rear of Tanti's big room, and throughout the dinner he devoted most of his attention to Constance. At first this pleased her. He had a quiet air of concentration which spoke of latent strength. He said little, and he never ventured on a compliment. This also pleased her, for she realized that he was treating her "like a man."

He did not pull out her chair; he did not offer to hang up her coat. He even permitted her to reach for things on the table without paying any attention to her creature wants. No man had ever treated her quite like that before, and yet he managed to make her feel that he was more interested in her than he might have been if he had surrounded her with the pleasant little

courtesies her sex had formerly exacted from all the men she had known.

When they rose from dinner he made no effort to pay any score except his own. Ruth paid for her own dinner. Constance paid for hers with one of the dirty dollar bills she had gotten from the pawnbroker. For a moment she felt curiously hurt and alone. Then, seeing the friendly faces of Ruth and Strange waiting for her at the door, she quickly recovered her good spirits, and, as they walked on, reflected that this was really the way to live, after all; an independent way; they were all good comrades together; certainly if she expected to have the *rights* of a woman it was but fair to release the *privileges*. All in all she was much pleased with this phase of the new life.

The three sat for a time in the little room where she had slept the night before, and where it was understood she was to stay until she found a place of her own. She sat on the couch and Ruth on a chair. There was another chair, but Strange did not occupy it. Instead he sat beside Constance.

Ruth appeared preoccupied and soon rose and began unfastening her waist. Then, yawning, and without a word to either, she passed into the bedroom she occupied. Strange sat for a few minutes, during which they spoke common-places. Then he rose, with an awkward, lan-

guid movement and passed into the bedroom after Ruth.

Constance went to a chair by the window and sat for a few minutes looking into the street. She heard the two moving about in the next room. Then all was quiet. She rose and knocked at Ruth's door. Ruth came in a negligee.

"Yes?" she asked, with limpid, open eyes.

"Oh!" exclaimed Constance, "I merely wanted to say goodnight."

"Goodnight!"

The door closed and Constance was alone again. She stood for a moment, puzzled. Then she began to undress. When she was quite ready to retire she went to the outside door and examined the lock, which appeared secure. Then she went to Ruth's door. There was no key in it and no latch. This vaguely distressed her, but she put out the light and went to bed.

For a long time she lay, with senses keenly awake, listening for something, but the something never happened. The outer door was not unlatched. No one left the flat.

An hour passed and all was still. Constance sat bolt upright on her couch. She was not alarmed, but she was rigid, as if with fright. All the conventions of her life, all the instincts of her ancestors were calling to her. Her rea-

son was not at work, but something down deep, deep, was crying out that she must not stay there longer. She felt almost degraded.

Then, as hour passed after hour, and her reason came to work, she told herself how narrow she was, and not only that, but how uninformed. Perhaps they were married, secretly. Perhaps that was why Ruth was so vehement in denouncing marriage? Yes. That must be it. Ruth would not announce it because her theories were involved. So Constance threw off the burden as she had always done with difficult problems when it was time to sleep. At any rate it was no business of hers. They had shown themselves to be good friends to her. Had she any right to question them further?

Finally she slept and when she woke it was with a consciousness of some big problem unsettled. Ruth was pounding on her door.

"Come in!" called Constance.

Ruth entered, all but dressed.

Constance pulled the covers up about her neck. "Are you alone?" she asked sternly.

Ruth laughed. "Yes."

Constance did not smile, but began dressing soberly. At length, when she was quite ready for the street, she spoke without looking at Ruth:

"Are you married?"

Ruth tossed her head with an impatient gesture. "Why ask a silly question like that?"

"I thought—perhaps—you might be."

Ruth now came over to Constance and embraced her, warmly. "Dear me—no," she said, "I don't believe in it—I told you that."

"But some of us do not put our theories into practice," said Constance, showing no sign of friendliness.

"I do," replied Ruth, and then insisted: "Why did you ask?"

"Well—"

"Did you think I was married to John?"

"I hoped so."

"Huh! Not for me. We *love* each other too much to marry."

With her new friend Constance passed out of the house and over to Tanti's. Both were silent.

Constance felt suffocated, and the first thing she did after breakfast was to go to a drug store, buy a postal, and address it to Arthur at his office. On the other side she wrote merely the address of Ruth's flat, and signed her initial.

CHAPTER XIII

ROUTED

ALL that third day of her assistance of the pickets she spent as she had the second—looking for Arthur. She had dropped the postal in the box a few minutes after nine and had observed that the next collection was made at 10:25. She figured that the postal would reach his office shortly after noon. So, from one o'clock on, every male figure that turned the corner leading to Broadway, elicited a keen glance from her. Never once did she think that he might not be in his office that afternoon. He was always so regular in his business habits, and she had always been able to count on him so faithfully that she could not imagine that he would not get her card that afternoon.

She kept the corner of the street where Ruth's flat was in full view all the time. The result was that the eastern end of her territory was not watched, and a number of pickets were arrested there by the police. When it grew late afternoon and Arthur had not appeared she did not dare move more than a hundred yards away

from the corner for fear he might come while she was not in sight of the house.

A few minutes before six, when she was weary with waiting and had about given up her hope that Arthur would come that afternoon, someone came up on her from the rear, and grasped her arm. Constance turned to confront Ruth.

"You're a bright decoy—you are!" exclaimed the militant Vance, "what are you doing here?"

"Waiting for you."

"You might have waited down there a few blocks—on your beat."

"Yes. I suppose so," said Constance, offended by Ruth's dictatorial tone.

"The cops have been very nasty to-day—twenty-eight arrests—seventeen in your district." There was accusation now in her voice, as well as in her manner. The simple statement of the fact seemed enough to Ruth to convict her third brigadier of culpable neglect.

Constance replied: "That's too bad," courteously.

"Huh!" said Ruth, shrugging her shoulders and then, with her engaging smile, she proposed that they go to supper. As Constance could think of no excuse for staying near the flat in the hope of Arthur's arrival, she felt obliged to go along, although she was not hungry.

Ruth bolted the food that was set before her, and within ten minutes had risen, hurriedly.

"I'm going down to the precinct headquarters to see what I can do for those girls," she said, "want to come along?"

"No, thank you, I think I'll go home. I'm not feeling very well to-night."

"All right. I don't know when I'll be back. Maybe not till midnight," said Ruth, and hurried away.

Constance put on her coat, and followed after, anxious to get to the flat and watch out of the front window, for she remembered there was an arc light on the corner, and thus she would be able to see all who came to the door below. She had not put on her postal the number of the flat, but only that of the building; so she felt she would be obliged to see everyone who came in the lower door. For she must properly enjoy the agony of his finding her in the polluted place. He would see then to what he had driven her.

As she left Tanti's she met John Strange. "Ruth went that way," she said, pointing after the disappearing Vance.

"Where's she going? Night Court?"

"Yes."

"Where you going?"

"Home."

"Guess I'll go along, too."

Constance said nothing and Strange joined her. She hardly noticed that he was at her

side, and felt gratified that he had the happy faculty of silence. When they reached the flat she felt it was odd that he should open the door for her and step aside for her to pass within. With any other man this would have seemed quite natural, but it was the first time he had shown even so slight a politeness. Not that he was rude; he was merely oblivious, apparently, of her sex. He had treated her "like a man."

She went into the sitting room which had now become her bedroom, took off her coat and hat and moved to an advantageous position in the rocker by the window. He hung up his hat in another room and joined her.

He talked pleasantly. She began to look on him as a diversion from the tension of watching for Arthur, and she studied him curiously, wondering how such a man could lead on a woman like Ruth Vance.

To her surprise she found that she did not abhor him so much as she thought she had the night before. In fact, he seemed to possess some halo of romance. No, it was not romance, but it was a halo. Perhaps of wickedness. Still, no placid, soft-spoken human animal like that *could* be wicked. She concluded that it was just the novelty of him that interested her, and not so much the novelty of *him*, as of the situation in which he existed as the central figure.

In fact, she was quite contented as she sat

there, with one eye out the window, one on him. Her adventure had brought her into a new realm, but it was interesting. And it would soon be over. Arthur *must* arrive before long.

"Had your dinner?" asked Strange.

"Yes. Didn't you have yours?"

"No."

"That's too bad. You'd better go and get it, then."

"Come along and keep me company."

"No, thanks. I'll stay here."

He sat for a minute, saying nothing. Then he arose, placidly, and went into the kitchenette. She heard him fussing around in there. After a little while he came out with a plate of beans and an end of bread.

"Have some?" he asked.

"No, thanks," she replied, looking out of the window, intently studying a man who was passing. It was not Arthur.

"Looking for someone?"

"Why—no," she replied, in confusion.

He was replacing the empty plate in the kitchenette and so did not note the confusion.

"You seem hipped on that old street."

"It is interesting. I love to look into a street, and see the people pass."

"Huh!"

For perhaps an hour they sat there, saying

nothing, doing nothing, while she looked into the street and he looked at her. He drew a chair up beside hers and she unconsciously moved hers farther away. He did not come nearer. Had she looked at him she might have seen his over-long lashes curl deliciously as he closed his eyes, seemingly in a dream, or she might have noted the mannerism he had of rubbing his huge strong palms down his thighs, as a grasshopper prunes itself before a jump.

But she almost forgot that he was there, so intent was she with her own thoughts, until she was brought back by his first observation, made after a very long silence.

"I like you," he said, simply, looking at her with the manner of earnest sincerity which became him.

She rose from her chair, for his now was within a few inches of her, and went over to the couch. "Yes?" she said, still giving little thought to him.

"Indeed I do."

"Well, I like you," she answered, striving to imitate his frankness, inspired with the feeling that these comrades had made her one of them, and not disposed to be critical of their relations.

"I am *very* glad of that," he said, rising and taking in his breath deeply. He walked to the window and looked out.

He came back and sat down, drawing his chair

over near the couch where she sat. "I like you *very* much," he added.

She laughed. "That's nice."

"Do you know why?"

"Can't imagine." She slipped naturally into what was with her a harmless coquetry, forgetting that they had already forsworn the customary relations between the sexes, and had dismissed coquetry along with gallantry, flirtation along with privilege. She insensibly glided from a man-to-man relation to the ancient man-to-woman relation before she knew it.

"Because you've no side."

"No *what*?"

"Side. Airs. There's nothing put on about you."

"Ah!"

"You're perfectly natural."

"Why shouldn't I be?"

"You're the first woman from uptown I ever saw who was."

"Really."

"I guess yes. That's why I have no time for the 'upper tenth.' All that I've ever seen of them is when they're riding high, too busy to speak to plain people, too important to notice the other nine-tenths."

"How funny. I don't quite know what you mean."

"Just that—I never—no, so help me—I

never believed in *aristocracy*—not till I saw you. I always thought it was just put—on, no real difference, except in *money*, and *opportunity*. But since I've seen you I know there is a difference. Aristocracy's something after all. It's something in the blood, something different from the rest of us."

Constance felt herself blushing, but she only laughed. "Pshaw!" she said, "People are all pretty much alike—when you know them."

He shook his head with firm decision. "No," he announced, as if he weighed his decision carefully, "I never saw anybody like you before. You haven't the slightest idea you're any better or different from anyone else, and yet you *are*! Your clothes are different; your manners are different; your talk is different. It's all better, finer, truer, and yet *you* don't know it. That's *my* idea of aristocracy. You don't pretend to be modest, but you are. You don't pretend to be better, but you are. You don't pretend you're smarter than others, but you are! That's my definition of a real upper tenner."

Constance laughed gayly.

Strange did not smile, in the least. He gazed upon her with concentration; his hands clutched his thighs vigorously; he breathed very deeply.

Suddenly she felt ill at ease. Her glance fell. "You are mistaken, Mr. Strange," she said.

"Me!" He rose, as if to control some emotion that was in him. "Never!"

She did not answer, but drew her chair up to the window again and looked out. Another long silence fell between them. She was oppressed, she did not know why. She looked out anxiously now for Arthur. Could she be mistaken in him? Could it be possible he would fail her this time? And if Arthur would not come she wanted Ruth to appear. She looked as eagerly now for Ruth as for her husband. Why she wanted Ruth she could not say, but she felt that she needed that fearless young woman, for Constance began to be curiously afraid of this blond giant who was so placidly serious, so fundamentally earnest, and so peculiarly personal. She did not want to hurt his feelings, but she did not want to be alone with him any longer.

He came over by her side and placed his hand on the back of the chair. She did not want to notice that his hand was there and yet it annoyed her.

"You're different," he said, "different from any of them—and heaps better."

She could stand this no longer. She rose, as if oblivious of him, and crossed the room to get a handkerchief from her purse. He followed her. Now she was afraid, but she refused to admit yet that there was any danger.

She smiled at him, pleasantly, with a great effort, but, with curious fascination she dwelt on his long lashes and his large, loose mouth.

"Yes. You're different."

"Oh! Pshaw! I'm not half so competent as Ruth Vance, nor half so much worth while!"

"You're worth a hundred Ruths!"

Now she was angry. She felt the blood course through her veins with fast mounting intensity. Suddenly it came upon her that she had never hated a man before, but that now she hated this man; she not only hated him, she loathed him. A vile creature who would live with a woman noble enough to sacrifice herself for him and yet make love to another whom he knew was married! The thought seared her like a hot iron. In bitter degradation of spirit she contemplated, even in that first swift instant, all to which she had fallen. She could deceive herself no longer. She would not be fool enough to let the man declare himself; she would forestall that.

He must have felt the angry passion that was in her, but he mistook its intent. Acquainted only with women of common mold and accustomed to having his way with them, and that without delay, he foolishly believed he had aroused her passional interest in him, and he stepped toward her, with a mellow gleam slitting through his long yellow lashes.

She stood before him, teeth clenched, hands clenched.

"Mr. Strange," she said calmly, with no appearance of the anger consuming her, and in a very low voice, "You are not fit to tie Ruth Vance's shoe laces."

He was close upon her now and he called out, sibilantly; "You're worth all the Ruths in the world!"

At that instant the door behind them opened noiselessly. They both heard it and looked up. Ruth Vance stood on the threshold. One glance was enough to tell them both that she had overheard Strange's last remark. What Constance said had been so low she could not have heard it.

The fire died from beneath his yellow lashes. His loose mouth fell from its momentary firmness and a sneer came to his lips. He stepped from between the two women, where he chanced to be standing, and moved toward the bedroom.

"So! You're back!" he said, carelessly, and started to leave the room.

But one gesture from Ruth held him. She stood there, utterly poised, without even a twinkle in her eyes, and as Constance looked upon her she was awed by the fires of genius she felt blazing up within this slender and militant young woman. It seemed to her that before this Ruth Vance cities would quail and

armies surrender. Never before in her life had she been so impressed by female majesty. She was not frightened; she was relieved that Ruth had returned. She breathed a happy sigh of content.

But her content lasted only an instant. It was now her turn to be consumed by those fierce eyes, the eyes which from public platforms had conquered thousands, the eyes which had blazed their way from a Broome Street attic to the leadership of a feminine army. And Constance wilted, she knew not why, under the swift surveillance.

The eyes passed over, through and beyond her with a contempt superb. It was as though a tiger over her prey had paused at a jackal's bray—paused and sniffed. Then her fingers began to curl up, slowly, felinely, with poised care, without haste. At length her hands were clenched so tightly the nails bit into her palms. Then, slowly, cautiously she unclenched them until they hung limp again. Now she uttered a single unmentionable word, with concentrated venom and ineffable sneering disdain!

And took off her hat, quietly, carefully. Then she removed her jacket, with the same care. Finally she turned on Constance, releasing her pent-up fury, and burst forth in a torrent of oaths; low words that Constance had never heard before; profanity teeming with ex-

ecration; the offal of the street's hidden vocabulary; words no type ever has printed; phrases to shock a gamin.

Constance seemed to shrink and shrivel, as thought a blast from a furnace had stripped the flesh from her bones. She felt humiliated beyond all endurance; she felt that she never again would be able to look any human being in the eyes.

At length Ruth stood by the outer door, which she had thrown open with a magnificent gesture, and, with wrath and vituperation, said, while she pointed;

"Now take your duds and git—*GIT!*"

Constance had already taken up her coat and her hat, intending to go before this final insult was thrown at her. Now she paused and saw that Strange was standing in the bedroom door, his hands in his thighs, apparently enjoying the virago exhibition.

"Git! Or I'll tear those clothes from your back like the rags they are!" cried the blazing Vance.

Constance now, to her own surprise, for she believed she had been humbled beyond her ability to rise, walked over calmly to her major general in the new army of freedom and Strange was astonished to see Ruth become more calm as she advanced. He had expected an assault; instead he saw the poise and the indefinable

quality of one woman tame the raging jealousy of the other, as an animal is tamed by the quiet force of its keeper.

"Ruth," said Constance, "I am going, but not because you put me out—"

"Huh!" sneered the glorious Vance, "It makes no difference why you git—as long as you do *git*!" In this new phase of her nature she had constantly lapsed into slang and ungrammatical usages which she would have scorned at other times when the veneer of her night school held.

"Perhaps not," replied Constance, weary, slight, unruffled and unafraid, "But before I go I want to tell you that I will always think of you as a friend. I do not blame you for what you have said to me, but I must tell you, whether you believe it or not, that I have not said one word or done one thing to encourage this—this creature you are living with—and that I leave you with nothing but pity. I am sorry, to the bottom of my heart, that you should ever have known him."

She passed out, and, once on the street, ran, as rapidly as possible, toward Broadway.

CHAPTER XIV.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE RETREAT

CONSTANCE went to the Dolly Madison, a woman's hotel where men are not allowed above the second floor without a written permission from the management. The night clerk, a man, looked at her with critical curiosity.

"Baggage?" he asked.

"I haven't any to-night. It will come later," she answered, with an assured manner. He looked at her more critically, but concluded, from her appearance, that it was safe to trust her. So he handed a key to a bellboy, whom she followed to her room.

She thought that night would be the worst she had spent since she had left home. It seemed much worse than her first night with Miss Rivers, for now she was alone. Nor was she any longer buoyed up by the excitement of the new interests she had found. Not only was there no new excitement; disillusion had left her sick at heart, dully sick.

Yet she slept sooner than she had on the first night, for she quickly made up her mind what

her line of action should be on the morrow. She was so contented with her determination that she turned over on her pillow blissfully and dozed off.

She woke very early and 'phoned for breakfast to be served in her room and, at the same time, asked for paper, pen and ink. Even while she ate she wrote. Several times she tore up her attempts at a letter. Finally she seemed satisfied with her accomplishment and surveyed it.

"ARTHUR:" (the letter read, for she had decided to be very direct and to leave off the "dear")—"I waited for you last night until quite late at the address I sent you, but, as you did not come, I decided to move here to the Dolly Madison, and I only write you now so that you will know where I am. Of course I cannot go back to live with you, since you have struck me, but I want to have Robert with me, and I hope that we can arrange that amicably.

"Sincerely yours,

"CONSTANCE."

She dreaded to send this letter, for she had an instinctive dislike for putting down on paper an exact statement of her position, which, now that she looked at it, seemed very simple, but which, before, had seemed so complicated.

Yet she thought the letter dignified, and fair. It admitted nothing on her side, and yet it put

everything straight up to Arthur. She was relieved to think that she would have to make no more decisions after this. She did not even smile to herself as she reflected that now Arthur would attend to everything. It was in keeping with her whole attitude toward him that she held him accountable not only for his own actions, but for hers, as well. Without directly admitting it, still she felt that he was responsible for all that had happened to her, even that disgraceful scene of the night before.

In fact, her only satisfaction in remembering what had happened, lay in the ease with which she found she could place the responsibility for her being in such a situation directly at Arthur's door. Of course she would never have uttered this, much less have written it. Nevertheless, the feeling permitted her to regain her dignity and self-respect.

She decided to send the letter by special messenger, so she dressed and went down to the office, where she saw the letter off. Then she returned to her room and waited. She had no doubt now that Arthur would appear in a very short time.

An hour later, hearing nothing, she went down again to the messenger office to make sure that the letter had been properly delivered. There she found Arthur's handwriting on the book,

acknowledging receipt. Now she was vaguely alarmed.

She bought a magazine and went back to her room, but was unable to read. She fidgeted around most of the morning, unable or unwilling to think consecutively. Just before luncheon a messenger was announced, from the office.

After she had receipted the book and was alone with the letter addressed in Arthur's handwriting a great fear came upon her. Never before had she seen that handwriting without a joy springing up in her heart. Now she was afraid to open the envelope. However, she nerved herself to it, and read:

"DEAR CONSTANCE: It is impossible for me to understand what you mean by this crazy note you have sent me. If I had received it three days ago I would have hastened to you, but now I can only wonder what asinine friends you have fallen in with who would advise or permit you to do a thing like this. Your place is at home. Go there and I will come to you.

"Yours, as ever,

"ARTHUR."

At first she was stunned. Then she was angry.

Not a word of love! Not a word of concern for what she had suffered all these days! Not

a hint of understanding of her troubles! And, more cruel than all else, not one syllable about Robert. He had brushed aside her concern for her child as if the boy did not exist. It was worse than a blow in the face! If a spark of love for him had been lingering in her it was gone now.

As she read and re-read the letter, her anger deepened. First she was angry at his insinuation that she had not taken this move of her own will; then angry at his covert insult to those noble women who had befriended her. She could see the curl of his lip as he sneered at "those suffragists." "Neuters" he had once called them, "with only enough gender to stir up everything and settle nothing."

Her place was at home, was it? Well, she would show him. She would have a home of her own, but it would not be with him. For the moment she thought she had never really loved him, and she recalled, poignantly, every trifling misunderstanding they had ever had.

Then, there trooped upon her all the confessions she had ever heard from women of their unhappiness. Nearly all the women she knew—and they were not many—had trouble with their husbands. She had not yet sunk so low as to make such confessions, and this pride solaced her. The fact that she had spoken of her unhappiness to Miss Rivers—she had forgotten

she had told of the blow—made her dislike that buxom bachelor maiden. Nevertheless she now felt welded, by the alchemy of a common misfortune, with all women. Where she had once, because of her selfish happiness, felt aloof and superior to other women she now found her heart going out to them and she felt herself banded, with them, against any woman who had happiness. She told herself, with much satisfaction, that where formerly she had been selfish she was now unselfish.

“Perhaps,” she told herself, “there is no such thing as married happiness. Perhaps there is only pretense of it.”

This thought gave her courage. She felt that she was growing, that she was no longer a child, that she was seeing things as they are. The shibboleth of the words “education” and “progress” which had played over her, without meaning much, all her life, now became a reality.

What she had seen the past few days had made her understand that women’s problems were mighty and various. Now, in the daylight, she was a true part of that vivid and complex city which battles so triumphantly against the individual. The city is the true test of the soul. The strong emerge strengthened. What little strength the weak have is taken from them. Finally, in pure despair, they reach out to their failing fellows for support, groping in the dark,

crying futilely that in a sophistical union they have found an imitation of strength.

Thus Constance no longer experienced those torments of loneliness which had assaulted her when she first left home. She felt that she had only to reach out, around the corner, and a quick solution of her problems would be found.

However, she did need money and the little she had obtained for her pendant was fast dwindling, for she had left home with few of the little necessities that make life endurable for a woman. So she went that afternoon to the Providence Loan Society with her engagement solitaire. She felt she would part with this now gladly, although for three years it had been her most prideful possession.

Her experience this time was quite different from that with the pawnbroker. She entered a marble building, scrupulously clean, passed into a private booth and was waited on by a clean-shaven young man, who treated her with some consideration. Even this slight courtesy encouraged her.

"How much?" he asked, but his manner was not altogether an insult, and Constance felt no swift sinking of the heart as she told him she wanted all she could get.

"You know we don't buy," he assured her.

"All right," she assented, "Will you loan on it?" She thought she might get a hundred dol-

lars, little knowing that the market value of her stone was six hundred dollars.

He disappeared for a minute, and finally came back, with the ring in his hand. "This is a good stone," he said, "It is worth about \$300. We can let you have only two-thirds of its value, however. That is our rule."

"And that would be?" gasped Constance.

"Two hundred."

"Very well. Thank you."

When she had her money safe in her purse, in new bills, she felt equal to anything. Instead of getting a sixth of what she had expected she had obtained twice as much.

Instead of treating her with contumely as though she were a hunted person the broker had acted courteously as if her business were legitimate. And when she stepped onto the street she was not in the bawling midst of the flotsam of humanity, but in the skyscraper newness of Fourth Avenue.

All of this affected her so cheerfully that she straightway passed into the shopping district and had parted with forty dollars almost before she knew it, ordering the parcels sent to the Dolly Madison. By that time it was half past three o'clock and she decided she would go to the hotel and have some tea, for she must make up her mind what to do.

She had the sinews of war, but how should

she fight? Whenever her thoughts led her too far into complications she always came back to firm earth by remembering that her father had never failed her, and, that if worse came to worst, she could telegraph him. But she did not want to go so far as to admit her troubles to him, yet. She wanted to fight the battle out herself, without assistance.

Instinctively she wished to return to the headquarters of the woman suffrage organization on Fifth Avenue, but she felt estranged there. She would not have the courage to face Miss Hunter and explain why it was that she had left Ruth Vance so precipitately. And somehow, in spite of a sympathetic belief in Miss Rivers, she did not want to face that cheery bachelor woman.

In this dilemma she applied her scalpel of social cure which she had been accustomed to apply in all disagreeable relations heretofore. When, for any reason, any person had annoyed her, she had been accustomed to simply ignore that person thereafter. She had never been obliged to curry favor and this was no time to begin. So she determined to merely "forget" Miss Rivers and Miss Hunter and Ruth Vance, in spite of the fact that she still was loyal to "the cause."

As she was turning from Fourth Avenue into the street that led to her hotel she met one of the

girls she had seen frequently during the three days she had been operating from Clinton Hall. It was one of the pickets, a bright, rather pretty little Jewish girl, who now came forward impetuously.

"Mrs. Rudd," she exclaimed, "Why aren't you on the beat?"

Constance shook hands, lacking the heart to ignore this friendly, ingenuous, wistful young person, and said; "Oh! I've quit down there."

The little Jewess's eyes danced. "Ha! Ha! I know why."

Constance was disposed to hurry on. She felt uncomfortable, yet she did not wish to be rude. "Do you?" she asked, trying not to appear superior, for, despite herself, there ran through her head the memory of what John Strange had said about her lack of "side." She would not have this waif think she had "side."

Thus encouraged the Jewess plumped out;

"John Strange!"

Constance felt the blushes rising from her heels to the top of her head. Now she was indignant to think that this street girl, this undergarment maker who earned only sixty cents a day should be thus intimate with her affairs.

"Oh!" she said, very simply, and started on, "I think you are mistaken!"

The Jewess caught her arm. "Aw, I didn't mean no offense, Mrs. Rudd, please. You see

some of the girls sleep down there in the flat below Ruth, while the strike is on, and they heard about the scrap; how Ruth put you out and all that, but—”

Constance was trying to go, but the Jewess held her arm, and, moreover, her curiosity was tugging at her to hear this sordid version of the affair.

“Good Gawd, Mrs. Rudd,” continued the Jewess, rapidly, “You needn’t have come up here last night, at all. Us girls ’d have taken you in.”

Constance patted the little hand that clung to her, grimy and calloused. “Thank you,” she said, starting again.

“Say, Mrs. Rudd—look a here—just between you and me—” shouted the Jewess, and Constance was obliged to stop for fear some passerby might hear more of the dreadful details, “Just between you and me Ruth aint got no such hold on Mr. Strange as she thinks she has. Honest to Gawd, she ain’t. Rudy Siverstein was saying to me only yestiday that Ruth hadn’t no more chanct to hold Mr. Strange if you wanted him than a tailor could hold a cop—no sir, no better ’n a tailor could hold a cop. Now, I’m just telling you, friendly, so’s you won’t let Ruth cuss you out too easy.”

Constance was smiling, in spite of the humiliation she felt, and she patted the grimy hand.

"That is very kind of you, but I haven't the slightest interest in Mr. Strange."

"What!" cried the Jewess, wondering if this were banter and she might not answer it with banter, "He's the slickest article around Clinton Hall and there's not a girl there wouldn't take him in a minute—"

Constance managed to say she had an important engagement, and the little Jewess stepped aside, but evidently not satisfied with the explanation Constance had given of her lack of heart.

When she reached her room Constance ordered tea, and then washed her hands and face, as though thus to wipe away memory of her contact with a sordid element, whose lack of refinement and decency had disgusted her to the core. Then she said to herself:

"I never can have anything to do with them again."

After which, she searched in her purse and found the circular which had reached her the day she left home. She realized now that she had wasted nearly five days through falling in with a woman so lacking in delicacy as was Miss Rivers. "Uncultured" was the word she used to herself to describe all those women she had found in that branch of the suffrage work.

Now, she made up her mind, she would seek the "cultured" element, where she could fight for her rights without soiling her hands.

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER A NEW STANDARD

IF Mrs. Graydon's organization was the advancing wave of the feminist movement Mrs. Leicester's was the frothy crest. While Mrs. Graydon had leased for her cohorts the entire eleventh floor of a great skyscraper Mrs. Leicester had gone a good bit higher, six stories, to be exact, and had leased the entire seventeenth floor of a greater skyscraper.

Of course Mrs. Leicester's floor space was only one-third that of Mrs. Graydon's, but, as her devoted, though refined, followers serenely maintained, it was more than half again as high. Height makes for vision, and perspective is vitally necessary in a political campaign.

Although Mrs. Graydon numbered her followers by thousands and Mrs. Leicester hers by hundreds only, the idea had somehow become disseminated throughout the city and state that it was in the smaller and not the larger office that the important advances were being made. Although Mrs. Graydon might send train loads of adherents to noisily storm the capitol at Albany it was common gossip that Mrs. Leicester's

handful of social and diplomatic aides, headed by the superb Mrs. Leicester herself had brought the state senate to within one vote of favorably considering a woman suffrage amendment to the constitution. As one of the anti-suffragists gleefully, yet dolefully remarked; "They would have carried the whole thing if Mrs. Leicester had not been flirting with a new physician that winter." "Let us send that physician a gold medal," suggested one of the anti's. "It won't help any," was the reply, "She may turn to tenors next year; it was an architect last, and an attorney the year before. Rumors are already thick about a novelist. She is a very cagey person, is Carrie Leicester. She realizes, now, that she had no business picking up a flirtation with a physician when a campaign was on, for physicians are 'broad' enough to match any woman's wits. Next time it will be our luck to have her keen about a novelist, or, worse still, an actor. That will be only healthy, and not a distracting diversion."

It was towards Mrs. Leicester's Full Franchise League that Constance turned her steps the following afternoon, fully satisfied that now she was on the right path. An express elevator took her to the seventeenth floor and there in gold letters she was confronted with the admonition; "Ring the bell."

When she had obeyed instructions and had been welcomed by a soft-voiced maid, in cap and apron, she was admitted to a large room which gave a much more pleasant impression than she had experienced when entering the massive business offices on Fifth avenue. There she had felt as if she were penetrating a foreign world, much as she had felt the few times she had gone to her husband's offices.

Now she was surrounded and played upon by the effects of a woman's realm. In the center of the room was a great marquetry table supported by huge gilt Louis XVI legs, and flanked by high-backed tapestry chairs. Gilt candelabra were seemingly everywhere, and on one side of the room, she saw a huge mahogany bookcase suggesting a home of wealth.

Meanwhile she had given the maid her card, in response to a polite request for it, and had seated herself in one of the tapestry chairs, where she looked out over the brilliant city dazzling in the rays of the afternoon sun.

Presently the maid returned and asked if Constance wished to see Mrs. Leicester. Constance had had no thought of intruding on the august presence itself, but her experiences of the last few days had given her a boldness she had not possessed a week before, and, without really stopping to think, she said: "Yes."

The maid disappeared, and in a moment, re-

turned to ask, "Please may I know your business?"

"I want to join the League."

Again the maiden disappeared and again returned. "May I have your maiden name?"

"Constance Curran."

"Thank you."

The maid was gone but an instant. She returned and opened the door leading to an inner room, and stood there, obsequiously, while Constance passed within. Constance held her breath with delight at her first view of the president's private office.

Directly across from her she saw an empire panel mirror topping a stationary stand, holding toilet articles which might grace the boudoir of a court beauty better than the office of a social reformer. A little to the left was a white enameled bookcase, the doors hung in rose silk, disclosing shelves upholstered in white silk sachet founced with lace. These might have concealed love notes and volumes of poetry rather than tracts of a political society. The walls were hung in delicate water-colors and the whole setting was essentially French.

But, while the setting was delicately feminine, the rosewood desk in the center was quite business-like. Behind it, alone, sat Mrs. Leicester, her head silhouetted against the pale tapestry of a high-backed episcopal chair. At her right

hand, where a stenographer ordinarily would have been, stood a carved tabouret holding a glass tray forming a bit of Oriental embroidery. Upon this tray was Mrs. Leicester's means of communication with everything, her telephone. She did not believe in writing letters, nor in having secretaries near her person. A maid and a telephone in a deliciously feminine background—these formed her sole paraphernalia for the overturning of a scheme of government. Alone there, with those sensitive ganglia to the outer world, aloft above the roofs of the universe, poised and smiling and confident, unhurried and unafraid, she was directing her far-flung battle-line.

The thought thrilled Constance as Mrs. Leicester rose and extended her slender, well-manicured hand. "Mrs. Budd," she said, with just the hint of a well-bred smile, and a faint trace of gracious condescension, "I am very glad to know you."

"Thank you. I am glad to know *you*."

"Please sit down."

"Thank you."

Both women sat and while Mrs. Leicester consulted some papers on her desk Constance had an opportunity to note this celebrated brunette whose figure for many years has been one of the conspicuous feminine lights of the metropolis, ever since, in fact, she married

Percy Leicester, multi-millionaire son of the old railroad-wrecker, and was able to leave the exclusive Baltimore society in which she formerly languished, to assume that station for which she was apparently destined, by virtue of audacious spirit, commanding intelligence, austere though fragile beauty and auspicious lineage. She needed only the Leicester millions to make of her a world-power, and now she sat upon her throne with the aplomb of an hereditary king.

Constance noted the waving mass of glossy black hair which before she had seen through glasses at the opera, tied up apparently without a pin or a comb, and forming a distinguished and not unbeautiful frame for the oval, thin and pallid face. She contrasted it, unconsciously, with the suspicious russet of Mrs. Graydon's painfully careful coiffure, and thought of the old saying, "blondes break the world; brunettes make it." She saw the delicate aquiline nose, the calm gray eyes, the mouth mobile and yet precise as though chiseled, the high cheek bones, the tiny ears. With swift comprehension she noted every detail, though with a woman's infallible instinct she had taken in the dress first, an affair of soft blue marquisette, of ruinous simplicity, embroidered with open work fleur de lis and with rich maltese lace about the throat.

"You wish to join our society?" asked Mrs. Leicester.

"Yes."

"Then how did you come up here, first, to the President's office?"

"I just came. Isn't that the way to do—when—you wish to join?"

"It is not usual," said Mrs. Leicester, with the ghost of a smile, "In fact I do not remember of any other applicant coming to me direct, at first."

Constance had felt before that there was some mistake in her finding herself so soon in the presence, and now she was abashed. "I am sorry," she said, moving uneasily on her chair, so disquieting was Mrs. Leicester's ironic dignity, "but I just naturally 'broke' in." She uttered the word "broke" with a little coquettish mune which caused Mrs. Leicester to smile.

"Never mind, my dear Mrs. Rudd, this exception need be known to none others than just you and me."

Constance felt warmed and thrilled with this intimacy and she did not know how to account for it, but was congratulating herself that at last she had found the woman who could truly appreciate her. In another moment she would have been willing to confide everything to Mrs. Leicester, but that eminent lady continued, in a most business-like manner:

"You *do* wish to join, do you not?"

"Indeed I do."

"Then I will register your application myself."

"That is very kind of you."

"Of course you know the board of directors must pass upon it, and I am but a single member of the board. However, I feel that I can assure you the application will be considered favorably."

"That is very kind—"

Mrs. Leicester apparently did not hear the replies Constance was making, and the atmosphere of intimacy was fast disappearing, when the president asked:

"May I ask your father's name, Mrs. Rudd?"

"Certainly. He is James B. Curran."

"Of Tioga Falls?"

"Yes."

"Ah!"

There was a slight pause, then Mrs. Leicester continued, and Constance did not fail to note the slight flicker of the left black eyelash, a mannerism which denoted Mrs. Leicester's satisfaction, as she continued;

"Your father is a member of the state senate?"

"I—think so."

"You *think* so. Don't you *know*?"

"I know he was elected to something several

years ago and that he goes to Albany each winter for two or three months."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Leicester, while the ironic smile crept perceptibly up on her mobile, chiseled lips, "He is a strong man—your father?"

"I have always thought so, Mrs. Leicester."

"I think so. I like never to make the mistake of underestimating the enemy."

"Enemy!" The word slipped from Constance, almost in alarm.

"All who oppose the full franchise of the race," said Mrs. Leicester, with her best controversial air, "are our enemies, but," she added, with a trifling smile and her most gracious condescension, "If they are fair we can honor them. I like your father because he is fair and frank. We know where he stands. He is not like most men who treat women as if they were children, without minds of their own. He tells us exactly where he stands, and why, and that sort of an enemy is one I like to meet."

Constance was exceedingly surprised and Mrs. Leicester could not fail to observe it. She reached into a drawer and took from it a paper. "Here I have," she said, "A letter from your father. He says he does not believe in woman suffrage because no woman in his family has ever expressed the desire to vote. Now that is a very definite ground on which to meet him—"

"What! My father?"

"Yes. Read the letter." Mrs. Leicester passed it over.

Constance read the familiar large round hand of her beloved daddy. "Yes," she faltered, passing back the letter, "That is like father."

"Have you never discussed this great problem with him?"

"I—I fear not, Mrs. Leicester."

"Ah! And why?"

"Well—I haven't seen him for more than six months."

"And you have become interested only recently, is that it?"

"Yes."

"I see. I see."

Mrs. Leicester carefully returned the letter to a portfolio, and then turned on Constance with an ease of manner and a smile that was bewitching. It would have been a stern skeptic, indeed, who could have suggested that she was not sincere. "But you have no doubt *now* that women have the right to vote?"

"None in the least," answered Constance hastily, secretly fearful that she was to be catechized, and trembling lest there might be further questions to reveal her woeful ignorance. But she had no cause for fear.

"Then, I presume that before long you will let your father know of your new faith?"

"Well—" Constance hesitated. Her father was her last reserve. Throughout her present trouble she had counted on him, if all else should fail. Moreover, she had never broached such a subject to him. While she had no fear as to how he might take it, yet she did not want to complicate her present situation with this other intangible problem, which anon had seemed so vital. At the same time she did not care to make a single misleading statement to Mrs. Leicester, whose mere presence had dazzled her. So she said;

"I do not know."

"Ah!" Mrs. Leicester frowned and looked out of the window. Then she turned back again with her best smile, "I know how you feel, perhaps, Mrs. Rudd. I may have intruded, somewhat. If I have, you will pardon me. You will see your way, in time, I am sure. For the present I will file your application and I am quite sure it will be acted on, without delay. In the meantime consider yourself one of us. There will be much to do."

Constance realized that her call, or interview, or whatever it was, for part of the time she felt as if she were making a social call and part of the time as if she were on a business visit, had been terminated. She rose, saying; "Good-by, then."

"Just a moment," said Mrs. Leicester, smil-

ing grimly to herself, "Would you care to assist us in the historical tableaux we are to give at the Waldorf next month?"

"Indeed I would."

Mrs. Leicester picked up a few pieces of paper from her desk and scanned them. "Well, then, I will place your name here," and she wrote something on the topmost paper. Then she came around from her desk so she could walk to the door with Constance. If any member of her executive committee could have seen this unusual attention she would have thought Constance could be no less than a Countess, or an old friend.

As they walked to the door together Mrs. Leicester said: "One of the tableaux will be a representation of Joan of Arc at the head of her army. I am to be Joan of Arc. Would you care to appear, with me, as one of Joan's followers?"

Constance sighed with happy delight. "Indeed I would," she exclaimed, "It would be an honor!"

As Mrs. Leicester turned to the rosewood desk, after the departure of the new recruit, she carelessly flipped the back of one hand across the palm of the other, as might a potentate who had picked up, unavoidably, some of the dust of the road, as he stopped while his girth might be tightened ere he continued his ride.

CHAPTER XVI

"TILLY" DRURY

ENSUED now a period of happy excitement for Constance. Subconsciously she realized that the only chance she had to escape brooding over the anomaly of her marital situation was to plunge into the new work she had taken up in woman suffrage. Yet she never faced the truth squarely. She told herself constantly that her nobler self had been awakened, that she was now more unselfish than she had ever been in her life, that she was making sacrifices of which no one knew anything, and that she was dedicating herself and her efforts to "the cause."

Thus the halo of martyrdom began to surround her, and, from constantly reiterating to herself that she had endured wrongs without complaint, a subtle something emanated from her which communicated this idea to other people, especially the well-bred women she met in her new connection with Mrs. Leicester.

Nobody questioned her about her personal history. That she was vouched for by Mrs. Leicester was enough. Mrs. Leicester herself

never made any reference to Mr. Rudd, and, if anyone else ever did, it was never to Constance directly. She was now in a different social strata from that of the crude Ruth Vance, and, as she was inclined to call it, the "vulgar" society of Miss Rivers. Not that she permitted herself to call Miss Rivers "vulgar." Certainly not. Although she should have been more inclined to call Ruth Vance "vulgar" her charitable idea of that vigorous youngster was that she was merely "common." To be "common" is more hopeless than being "vulgar." One is a state of being; the other a mere lapse of being, more or less temporary.

Had not Mrs. Leicester herself once, while waiting at a country railway station, being at the time with only one dear friend, bought a bag of fresh cherries from a boy, which she thereupon proceeded to pit, without the slightest assistance from her dainty fingers, strewing the stones around the edge of the platform like any yokel? This "vulgarity" was but a piquant lapsis, a trifling indulgence of the queen who could do no wrong. Moreover, it had been witnessed by only a dear friend, who never would tell about it, although news of it had become curiously spread abroad. But even an envious rival or an abandoned social reporter would never have dared suggest that Mrs. Leicester was, therefore, "common." Any more

than it was "common" for an eminent Southern statesman to appear on the floor of the senate one day in midsummer without his coat. Certainly not. To be "common" is to have a taint in the blood. That is an ineradicable fault, a sort of hereditary disease, an affliction which nothing can cure. Money has been known to cover it up, but never from the eyes of the discerning.

There were no "common" people in Mrs. Leicester's society. When Constance had rushed, or rather fallen, so hurriedly into Mrs. Graydon's organization she had been constantly offended by the things which had happened to her. The offensive questioning of Miss Rivers, even though done with a certain amount of discretion, had hurt her. The breezy *camaraderie* of Ruth Vance, though evidently ingenuous and well-meant, had grated on her refined sensibilities. These things she had affected to ignore, though much troubled as to how to cope with them. She had permitted herself to be blown along into the web of circumstance, whence she had not struggled to escape until the insulting effrontery of that animal Strange had forced her to flee from it all, in disgust.

But now, lulled by these new and comforting comrades, these ladies and gentlemen (for there were gentlemen, too, in Mrs. Leicester's society; sort of an auxiliary order, some-

what inferior to the female parent stem, but yet of importance, especially in the public prints), she had a chance to realize how much she had escaped and to become eternally grateful to the illustrious lady who had so graciously removed her from that "common" atmosphere.

Days passed in which she remembered only one delightful circumstance after another. First she was bidden to a meeting of the selected ladies who were to appear in the Waldorf tableaux. This was held in the same building with Mrs. Leicester's office, but on a lower floor and in a room of plain furnishing that might have served for any prosaic undertaking rather than this purpose of poetic illustration of the might and glory of womankind.

There she learned, by several chance remarks dropped in her hearing, that to be bidden to the upper floor was rather an exceptional honor. Some of the ladies, indeed more than half of them, had never seen those gorgeous offices of whose radiance many conflicting rumors were afloat. It was even said that Mrs. Leicester had there the divan on which Catherine de' Medici had reclined when receiving her military commanders whom she was launching against the pope. Constance had not seen any divan, but she was willing to believe that it was there, perhaps in an inner office.

When Mrs. Leicester herself arrived the buzzing talk ceased, and everyone waited on her word with profound attention. Constance observed that the President went through the form of submitting various propositions to the assembled ladies, but that, with one exception, these propositions were immediately voted upon favorably by all. The exception was a Mrs. Ledgate—Mrs. Rutherford Cummings Ledgate—who made a show of submitting a contra-proposition, which was met, with an exceedingly gracious condescension by Mrs. Leicester, whereupon Mrs. Ledgate immediately withdrew her objection, saying:

"Ah, Mrs. Leicester, now that you have explained more thoroughly I see, indeed. I should have supposed you would have foreseen all contingencies, as you always do, but I thought it only proper to bring out this point."

"You are quite right, Mrs. Ledgate, I am sure," said Mrs. Leicester, whereupon Mrs. Ledgate appeared much pleased at even so slight a recognition.

It was after the meeting had adjourned, committees having been announced, another meeting for the following day having been arranged, and various ladies having been appointed to attend to certain details of work, that Mrs. Leicester circulated among her henchwomen. Constance was one of the first she greeted, and

made a point of introducing her among the others.

When the meeting broke up Constance found that Mrs. Ledgate had attached herself and was walking down the hall with her to the elevator.

"A wonderful woman is Carrie Leicester—such executive force, such poise, and such *intellect*. I think it is her *intellect* that dazzles me so constantly," said Mrs. Ledgate.

"Yes, I think so," said Constance.

"She seems quite fond of you."

"Well—I don't know about that."

"You must have known her for a long while."

"No. Not—not—very long."

"Ah."

"But she has been very nice to me," Constance said this modestly, with a consciousness that she was deprecating her own importance.

"She is nice to *everyone*," replied Mrs. Ledgate, with a hint of injury in her tone.

"She must be," added Constance, hastily, confused.

"But particularly nice to you. She introduced you almost as an old friend."

"That was only kind. I am a newcomer, you see."

"Ah! You have just joined. Is this your first suffrage meeting?"

"No—no."

"I haven't seen you before."

"I have not been to Mrs. Leicester's meetings before."

"Are you a New Yorker?"

"I have lived here for some time—yes."

"Ah."

There was no such tone of inquiry in Mrs. Ledgate's manner, as she had found in Miss Rivers', but Constance felt more impelled to explain herself. Mrs. Ledgate almost made her feel that she had no business in this new society. So she explained.

"You see, I started to join Mrs. Graydon's organization, but changed my mind and made an application over here."

"Ah! I understand." Mrs. Ledgate smiled grimly to herself. Of the two hundred members of Mrs. Leicester's society scarce a dozen had been recruited from Mrs. Graydon's league, although it was common gossip that over a thousand applications had come in. Those only were admitted whose social standing was assured. With the rank and file of Mrs. Graydon's organization Mrs. Leicester would have nothing to do. No one knew this better than Mrs. Ledgate, but Constance was not yet fully aware of it.

When they reached the street Mrs. Ledgate said: "If you have nothing better to do won't

you come up to my home with me for some tea?"

Constance readily accepted the invitation and they stepped into Mrs. Ledgate's motor car. On the way uptown Mrs. Ledgate did *not* explain that she had fretted for weeks lest her application to join the Franchisers would not be accepted, nor that she had vowed that if it were not accepted she would not become a suffragist. Instead she conveyed to Constance the impression that she had believed in woman suffrage for very long, and had only been induced to declare herself when a person of so assured a position and of so unqualified a character as Mrs. Leicester had *invited* her to join her society.

"Of course," she said, "in a great moral question like this, which involves everyone, I think that social distinctions become lost. That is one reason why it did not seem to me wise to openly join the movement until I could be assured that the *political* work which is in so *low* a state, as everyone knows, could be done in a manner that was not only womanly, but ladylike. But when Carrie Leicester came out for it I said: 'There! It will be done properly now!' And the moment she asked me, as a favor, I did not hesitate a single day. She need not have put in that way—as a favor—for

I consider it my duty, but it was very kind of her, nevertheless."

"She is very kind," assented Constance, not quite sure of where the conversation might be drifting.

"She truly embodies the saying, 'Noblesse oblige.' The delightful part of it is she is so unconscious of her superiority. Of course, you know, the activity of Mrs. Graydon is really apt to hurt the cause."

"Indeed."

"Oh! My, yes. She has been quite *de trop* since her divorce; in the old families, I mean. Of course, she has some intimates; a woman of her wealth is bound to have, but the houses she formerly knew, when poor Billy Graydon was her husband, are pretty much closed against her."

"Ah!" Constance adopted Mrs. Ledgate's noncommittal exclamation unconsciously.

"Yes. Mrs. Graydon may have much more attention from the newspapers—they are always so vulgar, you know—but when it comes to having a real influence with the legislature you will find that Carrie Leicester will be heard from. Besides, she can reach the men of influence with whom Mrs. Graydon can never even talk."

By this time they had reached Mrs. Led-

gate's home, a modest house off the avenue, in the forties. Mrs. Ledgate was quite informal, not even excusing herself so she might remove her wraps, but leaving them in the hall, whence the maid promptly removed them. She passed in immediately to the drawing-room with Constance and ordered tea to be served, but she was unable, before some callers arrived, to learn more of the mysterious social position of this remarkable young person who had so curiously captured the allegiance of Mrs. Leicester. Mrs. Ledgate, of course, had no *doubt* of Constance's social importance; still, she was curious about it.

Two young women called and Constance was about to excuse herself, when a man was announced and Mrs. Ledgate took her by the hand.

"Stay," she whispered, "you must meet Mr. Drury—T. Illington Drury, you know—a most charming chap. Rather young, but up on suffrage. Oh! way up. Rather brilliant in his way—and of the most excellent family."

He came in breezily, a tall, thin, well-tailored young man, with blonde hair and a sweet little blonde mustache, and shook hands all around, being finally introduced to Constance, beside whom he sat, and from whom he took some tea.

"Oh! Tilly!" exclaimed Mrs. Ledgate,

"Mrs. Leicester has you down for the Molly Pitcher tableau."

"Really! That's very kind of her. And, pray, what am I to be—the ramrod?"

"Nothing like that for you, Tilly," laughed one of the girls. "Women are to take all the *strong* parts."

Mr. Drury smiled broadly at this, while Constance observed that while he sat he held his knees close together, and his feet out. Somehow she always had had a prejudice against men who sat that way, but she tried now to be just and forget her prejudice.

"What *am* I to be, Mrs. Ledgate?" he asked, sipping his tea, which Constance had handed him.

"The corporal of the battery, or whatever the military term is for the man who hands the shot and shell to Molly."

"And who's Molly?"

"Me!" said Mrs. Ledgate, pointing proudly to herself.

With that Drury immediately thrust himself before Mrs. Ledgate on his knees, holding up the cup of tea towards her in an obsequious manner and exclaiming: "At your service, illustrious Moll! Your enemies are mine! Shall we ball them first, or powder them? Command and I obey."

Mrs. Ledgate patted him affectionately on the

head, while her three guests laughed, and she exclaimed: "Get up, Tilly, you silly boy."

Mr. Drury thereupon rose and reseated himself, while he repeated, roguishly, glancing from one to another:

"Just Tilly—a merry, merry maid was Tilly;
She jumped into a bramble bush and did a thing
quite silly;
Was scared of a cow,
Got scratched—O! Wow!
For you see her name was not Billy!"

All laughed, uproariously.

Soon after this Constance insisted that she must go, and all hoped they would see her again soon, especially Mr. Drury.

"You are in the tableaux, too, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes, I am glad to say."

"Then we will see each other at the rehearsals."

"Indeed, yes," she answered enthusiastically, for she had been quite delighted with her reception throughout the afternoon, but as she rode down town on the bus she reflected that she did not care for Mr. Drury very much. He was very polite and attentive, it was true, and his manners were *perfect*, but—

CHAPTER XVII

AGAIN THE CLOVEN HOOF

WHILE she could not be fully aware of the extreme ease with which she had penetrated a certain exclusive social set Constance was still city wise enough to know, to some extent, what Mrs. Leicester's avowed patronage had done for her. And she was mightily pleased. For days the whole world seemed very rosy, despite the doubts that sometimes came to her at night.

As a girl, in Tioga Falls, social distinctions had meant little, perhaps for the reason that she was as much an arbiter of them as anyone else. At college she had belonged to the most exclusive sorority, and there she had worn her honors easily. When, on her marriage, she had come to New York, it was with little thought of what her social position might be.

But she had found herself the merest atom in that vast sea of city life. She had no social position. She had been absorbed in her husband and child and had told herself that this was sufficient. Yet she had secretly chafed at the restraint, nor had she been at all happy with

the chance acquaintances Arthur brought, such as Mrs. Bolston and Kate Werther, good enough souls, no doubt, but of no particular quality, no particular standing. Nor did they seem to understand her, or to have anything in common with her.

She had read the papers; she had heard vague rumors, vague gossip, and so she knew by hearsay of this mythical social realm into which she hardly ever had dared to hope she might enter; to which she had, as she thought, given little attention.

Now, however, when it was practically thrust upon her, she found that she had really given it a great deal of attention. Every once in a while she was introduced to some woman whose name brought a pleasant shock of surprise; it was a name she had heard or read about in the society columns of the papers.

To leap thus, from nothing to everything, is an experience that few women undergo. Many plan, strive, sacrifice and endure for years to accomplish what Constance accomplished, without hardly realizing it, in the space of no time at all. Had she been less modest, less well-bred, or less mysterious than she was she might not have succeeded even so much as she did. The propulsion given her by Mrs. Leicester, however, was enough. It would have "made" a woman more questionable, out-

wardly, than Constance, but she was so demure and quiet that she aroused no antagonisms, and her status was permitted to pass without question, once it was noised about that Carrie Leicester had taken her up.

Yet she never spoke with Mrs. Leicester, except occasionally to pass the time of day, at some committee meeting, or at the frequent rehearsals for the tableaux, which now grew in frequency and importance as the day for the grand affair approached.

Another thing conspired to distract her attention and make her feel at ease with her world, and to forget, for the moment, the abnormal situation in which she was placed regarding her family. The hotel she lived in was the very center of more woman activity than could be found anywhere else in the civilized world. Within a stone's throw was the "wealthiest woman's club," the "only woman's university club," to which she had often wished she might belong, the woman's immigration bureau, the woman's aid society, the woman's this, the woman's that, and countless apartment houses devoted exclusively to bachelor women or to women living alone. She never passed to or from her room or about the streets in her neighborhood without being constantly brought into a fuller realization that women have a vital part in the workaday world, that they are in-

dependent, know their own business and how to attend to it, have important things to do and are accomplishing them with celerity.

Moreover, she had a little money, and she never had been disposed to look ahead. There was still the diamond and emerald ring to pawn. What she should do when the money she obtained from her jewels should go she did not pause to inquire. In a vague way she told herself she would find work, although in her heart, she really expected Arthur to relent before long, and make some advances. She was certain she would never make another advance to him. That she was skating on thin ice she would not admit to herself, for things seemed now so thoroughly substantial, what with her domicile in this well-equipped woman's hotel and her delightful association with these important women.

It did not seem at all strange to her that she should be so freely admitted into the inner circles of the Franchisers, for she had never really thought herself less important than even Mrs. Leicester, and, having no knowledge of the host of climbers waiting without the portal, it could not seem remarkable to her that she was admitted to circles in which, down in her heart, she knew that she belonged. It all appeared so free and friendly that there could not be the

slightest possible danger, and that it would not last as long as she wished it to last never occurred to her.

One day, however, when the tableaux were still a week from materialization, after a meeting of a committee on which she had been placed, Mrs. Leicester, beckoned as the ladies were about to leave the lower office where they held their business sessions and Constance went to her.

"Would you mind coming up to my office with me for a moment, Mrs. Rudd? I have something that will interest you," said Mrs. Leicester.

A number of the committee heard this, and none of them failed to look at Constance, with scrutinizing envy. That there was some secret in Mrs. Leicester's attraction for her several suspected, but that she should be invited thus, privily, to that gorgeous office, was a little too much for equanimity patiently to bear.

"Where did Carrie Leicester pick *her* up?" asked one of Mrs. Leicester's oldest friends who had not been honored with an invitation to the upper sanctum, as the two left the offices.

"I know nothing whatever about her. Do you?" replied another, who had secretly hoped that *she* might be one of Joan's followers, whose names and pictures were sure to appear

in all the papers in juxtaposition with that of Mrs. Leicester.

"Nothing."

Several others echoed, "nothing." Despite Constance's easy bearing of her honors and her evident gentility it was evident that these worthy ladies would not restrain themselves from a polite social assassination if the opportunity ever came to perform it without too evident a danger.

Meanwhile Constance, secretly elated, but poised and smiling affably, was entering the boudoir-office, where she was urged to seat herself and become comfortable. Mrs. Leicester, first looking herself over carefully in the mirror and smoothing a few recalcitrant black hairs in the flowing mop falling over her forehead so gracefully, then turned to her desk and took from it a portfolio. From the portfolio she selected a letter, which she placed before her on the desk.

"My dear," she said. It was the first time she had called Constance, "my dear," and therefore a thrill of gratification passed through the youthful frame. "My dear, I have a letter here from your father—"

Constance sat bolt upright, for the first time vaguely alarmed.

"Yes," she said guardedly.

"Have you heard from him recently?"

"No."

"Ah, I thought not. At any rate, he writes me that he has heard nothing from you regarding your belief in the equal suffrage of men and women. Have you not yet written him?"

"No. No, Mrs. Leicester, I have not. I have been very busy. I have not had time." A sick fear was at her heart. Whenever she had thought of that tentative promise to write to her father she had put it from her mind. How could she let her father know her relations with Arthur, at least not until there was something definite to say!

Mrs. Leicester smiled again her most ingratiating smile. "I fear you do not understand," she went on, "the perilous position in which the equal suffrage bill now stands. It is, at the present time, before the judiciary committee of the state senate. Of that committee your father is the chairman, and I am informed, from reliable sources, that he probably will have the deciding vote. I wrote to him last week, telling him that you had joined our society, that you were a hearty convert to the righteousness of equal suffrage, and that I wished to recall to him his promise, made to me earlier in the year over his signature, that he would vote for my bill as soon as some woman member of his family expressed a desire to vote."

Constance felt almost nauseated, yet she could only gasp, "Yes. Yes."

"In this letter," continued Mrs. Leicester, in an even tone from which had dropped all of her social warmth and which to Constance seemed as precise and cutting as a steel chisel, "your father writes me saying, not only that he has had no such expression from you, but that he doubts if I am correct in saying that his daughter has joined my—er—*our* society."

Constance felt herself blushing, while Mrs. Leicester's cold eyes were passing through her.

"Now what I would like you to do," continued the merciless voice, "is to sign this telegram," and she placed before her young recruit a yellow blank, typewritten.

In a maze of terror Constance read:

"Senator James B. Curran, Albany, New York.

"As an enthusiastic member of Mrs. Leicester's Full Franchise League I urge you to vote for the early and favorable consideration of House Bill No. 7314 now pending before the judiciary committee. I am fully informed of the meaning of this measure and it has my heartfelt support."

Constance read and reread this telegram several times.

"Sign," said Mrs. Leicester, passing over to her a rosewood pen, dipped freshly in ink, "and I will see that it goes immediately."

Constance sat, stunned. The full force of this astounding situation she could not understand at once. The subtle machination whereby this dazzling woman with the eagle eyes now held her she was loath to credit. Not once had she suspected the sincerity of Mrs. Leicester's patronage, but, if nothing else could convince her that it was motived in selfish interest the compelling tone, the masterful manner of the eminent woman would now force her to believe the worst. Mrs. Leicester saw this disillusionment, even as it occurred, but she thought she had correctly estimated the strength, experience and intelligence of the woman with whom she was dealing, and she had no time to mince matters. To her it was imperative that the telegram should leave immediately.

However, with an effort, Mrs. Leicester smiled, with an attempt at her gracious sweetness. "My dear," she urged, "you have no idea how important this is. Come. Sign. That's a good girl. We need your father and we need him badly and you are the one person who can win him for us. I may appear impatient, but I have been frightened this afternoon by news I have from Albany and I know there is no other way than this—"

For once a caller did not wait for Mrs. Leicester to finish talking before rising. Constance clutched the telegram and started for the door.

"All right, Mrs. Leicester," she said, "I'll take this with me, and send it, later, from my hotel—"

Mrs. Leicester sent after her one penetrating glance, then shrugged her shoulders and turned to her desk, saying, with an ironic twist to her mobile mouth:

"Very well. Make no mistake. It is vitally important to the cause."

But, as Constance left she knew she had lost, and she thereupon wrote a note to the chairman of the tableaux committee, which was not to take effect until the day before the big event.

Constance went directly to her room, but, on the way, she tore the telegram into tiny pieces, and scattered them along the street, carefully, in widely separated places, as she passed.

The next day the judiciary committee of the state senate voted to leave Bill 7314, providing an equal suffrage for men and women, on the table, but Constance knew nothing of it, as the news appeared at the bottom of a column on an inside page, and she seldom read the newspapers thoroughly, while the women whom she saw, though interested apparently vitally in the suffrage problem, knew nothing practically whatever about following its fortunes.

Two afternoons thereafter Constance went to Mrs. Ledgate's home to attend a final rehearsal of the Molly Pitcher tableau, for that gracious

lady had invited Constance to assist her in that also, believing it would add prestige to her picture to have one of the figures in Mrs. Leicester's tableau appear with her.

It was a pleasant gathering, such as Constance had become accustomed to in the past few weeks, in which everything, except suffrage, was discussed. Mr. Ledgate had once been unkind enough to say that the only reason they did not discuss suffrage was because no one who attended his wife's teas knew enough about the subject to talk of it intelligently, and that all were considerate enough of each other's feelings to take it for granted that there were no unbelievers present.

This had been grateful to Constance, for, since leaving Houston Street, the imprecations of Amy Dart seemed far off, and the strident complaints of Ruth Vance seemed very "common," indeed. It was so much more pleasant to achieve this great reform of "the enfranchising women" in the present manner, without noisy strife, or "vulgar" bickerings, in which everyone concerned, like well-bred people, made no reference to those vital subjects which were likely to arouse angry disputes.

So she was surprised when "Tilly" Drury said to her: "I hear you've had a run-in with the great Leicester."

"Oh! Not at all," replied Constance

blandly, who had noted that several ladies, including her hostess had been unusually cool toward her. "What made you ask that?"

"I heard something."

"Who told you?"

"A little bird."

"There is nothing in it—nothing at all."

"Very well," said "Tilly," winking and patting her arm, "tell me when you feel like it, and, meanwhile, remember that I'm your friend. If any of these little wolves try to put anything over on you just run to Tilly and he'll protect you." He disappeared in the crowd, but she was grateful for his expressed friendliness, for a vague discomfort began to oppress her. There *was* a distinct change in the social atmosphere of the Ledgate home. She could not avoid noting that. It became so apparent that she suddenly felt a desire to leave, and said so to Mrs. Ledgate, who made no remonstrance.

Now, alarmed, she knew not for what, she hastened away, when she found Mr. Drury beside her on the sidewalk.

"Ah," said Tilly, admonishingly. "You tried to run away from me, but I had an eye on you. Come. Let's take a taxi."

She was glad to get into the taxi with him, for she felt the need of a friend. She had not resented his patting her on the arm, or his taking her by the shoulders, seemingly by accident,

as he assisted her in, for she had never counted Tilly Drury a *man*, in the sense in which she had known other men. He seemed so much a part of the suffragists, so intimate in all their affairs, and now so sympathetic in a trouble which she did not understand, that she leaned to him for sympathy almost as easily as she would toward a woman; perhaps more easily.

He saw that she was preoccupied and he took her hand, which she gently disengaged from him, still without offense. "Come, tell me all about it," he said.

"There's nothing to tell."

"Tut! Tut! Your Uncle Tilly is next. Carrie Leicester's thrown you down."

Constance sat up with a start. "What do you mean?" she exclaimed, in surprise.

"Well," he answered, coolly, "if you don't know you are the only one in ignorance. But I suppose that's the way. Bad news gets to the person it affects last of all."

"Please, Mr. Drury, what do you mean?"

"Haven't you been taken out of the Joan of Arc tableau?"

"Not that I know of," replied Constance, her lip quivering, for something told her that this was the truth, and, at the same time she realized, for the first time, how important it seemed to her to appear publicly in that event. Easily won prizes are not valued until lost.

"I guess it's true. Mrs. Ledgate says so, and she's a foxy girl, all right."

A big tear dropped from Constance's face and splashed on her hand. She looked out of the side of the cab, not noting that they were driving up toward the park in a direction opposite to her hotel. Again Drury took her hand and she did not resist this time, for she poignantly felt the need of *some* human sympathy.

"There! There!" he said, "tell me about it, and I'll see a way out for you. You can climb back with Carrie Leicester yet. She never takes anyone up the way she did you and then drop her for *good*. This is only some quixotic notion of discipline she has. I know her—the cruel little tyrant. She has her way." He chuckled to himself, and then linked his arm in Constance's.

"No," said she, "it's all right. I don't mind. Only I wish I had known earlier."

"It's not too late now. Tell me. What is it?" He placed his arm around her, but so gently that she did not notice it, or, if she did, she felt no alarm, not yet realizing that it was a *male* with whom she was driving.

"She wanted me to send a telegram to my father and I wouldn't do it. That's all," said Constance, stoutly.

"Whew!" whistled Tilly.

There was a silence, then he asked: "And your father's a state senator, isn't he?"

"Ye-es," whimpered Constance, the whole enormity of the thing sweeping upon her, and her last reserve down, now that her secret was shared by another. The tears were dropping rapidly.

His arm was well around her now and he had drawn her close to him. He had caught her chin in one hand was drawing her face over to him, before she realized. Then she struggled away from him, with determination. Now he clasped her to him vigorously, and kissed her. He attempted to kiss her on the cheek, but she jerked away as he started, and the kiss landed on the tip of her ear.

Now all her other trouble was gone. She was alive only to the present iniquity. "Mr. Drury!" she exclaimed violently, and tried to escape from his embrace. He held her securely until he saw she was thoroughly frightened. Then he let her go, and she sank into the opposite corner of the cab, sobbing.

He tried again to take her hand. He tried to soothe her with words. She shook him off and suddenly gained control of herself, looking on him now with blazing cheeks.

"You're a cad!" she said, simply.

"No. A suffragist, and we're in the same



boat. You needn't be so proud. It's all in the day's work."

"Don't you know that I'm married?" She thought this would settle everything.

"So much the better," said he, smiling.

"But my husband—I'm not divorced, not even separated," again her chin quivered. In the depths of her soul she wished she had never left home.

"Don't be so tragic, my child," he answered. "There are many others like you—most of those in Mrs. Ledgate's drawing-room—only none of them are quite so attractive. Don't you know that the new day has dawned? Women are not squeamish any longer. They've taken a leaf from men's book, and they're right, too, say I. Why shouldn't you? Men see whatever women they like. Why shouldn't women see the men they like? I hope, little sweetheart, you don't dislike me—" And he went on, insinuating a passional equality which at first she did not understand, but, at length his language became such that she could not mistake it, and she found herself again becoming angry, through and through, as she had that night when John Strange had approached her. But she had feared Strange; she only despised this Tilly Drury.

"Stop the cab," she said.

"Not yet. Let me take you home," and he

made another ineffectual grab at her hand.

She looked out. They were in the park. She called to the chauffeur, who stopped the cab. Then, without another word to her companion she got out, and walked rapidly over to Madison Avenue, where she boarded a car, and was soon at the Dolly Madison.

There, in her box, she found a letter written on the crested stationery of the Full Franchise Society.

"MY DEAR MRS. RUDD:" (it read), "I am instructed by the president to inform you that the number of the followers of Joan of Arc in the tableau to-morrow has been unexpectedly decreased, owing to the smallness of the stage, and that she regrets it will not be necessary for you to appear.

"Respectfully yours,

"THE SECRETARY."

CHAPTER XVIII

A HELPING HAND

ON the early morning mail next day came a letter from Tilly Drury.

"DEAR MRS. RUDD": it said, "truly I want to help you and I have been to some pains to unravel the mystery. *I know the whole story now.* There is the simplest thing in the world to do if you will only let me counsel you. I know—and this is positive—that you need only go to Mrs. Leicester and sign that telegram and let *her* send it to be back in again with everybody stronger than ever. Please do it. I would so like to see the Ledgate hop around and eat humble pie. It would be great fun. You can sting all that crowd—a-plenty—if you just take my tip, which I am giving to you, I will admit, partly for a selfish reason. I want to see you again. But that is not necessary. You don't have to see me, if I am so *very* obnoxious. At any rate, do get back at the wolves! Yours, ever,

"TILLY."

Constance read this over once, then tore it into tiny bits and dropped it in her wastebasket.

Nor did she find the slightest temptation in the suggestion. She was through with those people *forever*, she told herself. Everything she had heard of them was true. They were snobbish, unkind, cruel, designing, *and* immoral!

She now even preferred Mrs. Graydon's organization, if compelled to choose between the two, but she felt she could not go back there. Her pride would not let her do that. She thought of the friendliness of Miss Rivers with a blush at her own ingratitude. She even longed for Ruth Vance. However, she would not go back to them, for that would require some explanation, and she could not bear to think of that.

Meanwhile she cast up accounts and found she had only twenty dollars left. It seemed as if her little flyer into freedom was about at an end. What should she do? In her perplexity her room seemed too small, so she went onto the street, in a vague idea that she would find work, for that she must go to work soon seemed the only solution now.

The very first corner she turned she ran plump into Kate Werther. She was glad to see even that somewhat rollicking blonde person who had awakened her resentment against Arthur the night which now seemed many ages past.

"Hello!" exclaimed Mrs. Werther, breezily,

"you certainly are keeping shy of your friends these days. Where are you?"

"At the Dolly Madison," answered Constance, frankly. "Won't you come in with me and sit down a while?"

"Don't mind if I do," said the unconventional Kate. Constance wondered at herself that she could consent to talk to this woman whom she abhorred, but there had occurred so many more important offenses since the night Kate Werther had hurt her that she rather welcomed the ancient friend.

When they were seated Kate exclaimed: "Well, I certainly never thought *you'd* really become a suffragist."

"No! Why not?"

"Why, I thought you and Arthur were the happiest people out."

"So! *All* suffragists are not unhappy."

"Hum. Well, if they're not they will be," laughingly.

"But I'm happy." This resolutely.

"I'm glad to hear it. Arthur's not."

"Ah!" Constance frowned, striving to make herself believe that she was offended to hear Kate Werther speak of her husband by his first name, but in reality satisfied in thus quickly arriving at the question she did not know how to ask.

"Is that so?"

"Indeed not. He looks like a wreck. Jim says they're going to insist down at the office that he take a vacation. You see he's general manager, which Jim says is a mighty important place, and he'll have to be in better shape before the fall work comes—"

"Is he ill?" Constance asked, unable to veil her concern.

"Not exactly, Jim says. I've only seen him once, at a distance, when we passed him on the street the other night. He just seems to have run down—lost twenty pounds, Jim says. We can't get him out, though we've invited him to our house any number of times. He just hangs around home, moping with the baby. He really ought to go out more, you know. It would do him a world of good—"

"Hum!" said Constance.

Now Kate was very anxious to ask some questions, but she did not feel yet that the situation would permit her to mention the subject of divorce, though both were aware that the slightest slip on either side would bring it before them. Finally Kate said:

"I see by the papers you are to be in the tableaux—*Mrs. Leicester's* tableaux—at the Waldorf to-morrow. I'm coming to see you. Got my ticket several days ago. Paid five honest dollars for it. If you want some satisfaction you can know you got that for 'the

cause,' because I wouldn't have paid if you were not going to be in it."

"I've changed my mind," said Constance soberly, "I'll not appear in the tableaux."

"Really? Then my money's gone. I'll go right up and ask for it back. Come now, you haven't really quit altogether, have you?"

"Not exactly, only I don't want to appear publicly—not yet. I've decided it would not seem just right."

"Oh! Of course not. But, tell me, how is Mrs. Leicester. She must be a very fine woman."

"She is," said Constance, coldly.

"But, between you and me," replied Kate Werther, quick to note her advantage, "she doesn't really care for this suffrage thing, does she?"

"Oh, I think she does."

"And you don't, *really*, do you?"

"Really."

"Dear me. I can't understand it. How any woman can go out and hunt for trouble like that when she has a man to take it off her shoulders is something I cannot understand. And look here, Constance Rudd, I don't believe *you* care any more about it than I do. I know you don't know any more about voting than I do. And what possible good could either of us *do*?"

"Oh! lots of good," protested Constance. "You've no idea how bad things really are. Women are needed—"

"At home—yes; not lalligaging about."

Constance winced at this. She rose, saying, coldly: "I must go, Mrs. Werther."

Kate also rose, angry. "Look here, Constance Rudd," she said, "I'm going to tell you something you may not thank me for now, but that you will thank me for some day. You have no business out with these fool women. Your place is at home with your husband and your baby. They both need you. I'd advise you to chuck this whole rotten stuff—*votes for women*—bah! It has ruined more homes than it ever has helped!" And she flaunted off, her skirts alive with indignation.

On the next mail came a letter from Arthur. She opened it with trembling fingers, and, after she had read it, she sank on her bed, and sobbed for hours.

"DEAR CONSTANCE," he wrote, "I have given up striving to understand the meaning of this terrible calamity to our home. I had not intended to communicate with you again, but I have a letter from your father inquiring about you. It seems that he has heard from a Mrs. Leicester something about you and he wants to know the meaning of it. I do not know what to write to him, and enclose his letter, which I hope you will answer."

"Besides, Constance, I want you to come back. I cannot understand why you are not here. You say you want Bobby. If you want him as much as you say you do you would have come to him before this. You can have him. He is here for you. And I am here.

"As ever, yours,

"ARTHUR."

If this letter had arrived the day before she would have answered it proudly. Then she would have been buoyed up by her success with the Full Franchisers. Or, if she were to appear in the tableaux the following day, she would answer it now. In fact, she had had it in her mind that once she had appeared by Mrs. Leicester's side in public she would be willing to go back to her husband, with her importance thus advertised.

But now this terrible calamity of social ostracism had come upon her, and she imagined that the whole world would know of it. Nor could she turn to her father. Events had so transpired that in his eyes she had been made to appear the transgressor. If she could only have returned to her husband, successfully, in a proud position, she could have humbled him; she could then have brought him *actually* to the spirit he *seemed* to show in this letter.

Yet, even now, he did not understand her. Had he not said so, in black and white? And

she so longed for understanding. For the moment she was disposed to think decently of Tilly Drury. He, at least, had the quickness to perceive her difficulties and to find a way out of them, even if it were a way she did not care to try. Arthur never could have done that much. He would have scoffed at the idea that anyone *could* care whether or not Mrs. Leicester withheld her patronage.

Consumed with these doubts and distresses, fears and uncertainties, Constance dressed and went out for a long walk over toward the river, in the east part of town, where she would have no chance of meeting anyone she knew.

As she passed among the tenements she felt that her inner misery was deeper than the outer she surveyed. That she was but an atom touched by the deep sickness of the times she did not know. Attacked with common sense and determination and the spirit of sacrifice her troubles might have been as nothing, and yet she was not entirely to blame for her predicament, although she was a soul without a compass.

She was a victim of what Rabelais nearly 400 years ago, with Gargantuan ridicule, called, even then, Progress, and under its spell cast Panurge's sheep. Profound Rabelais, universal Rabelais; apropos to-day as then! That shibboleth Progress still casts its spell over

human sheep, adrift in their own misfortunes and led but more deeply into the mire by its siren call. Progress in America has to-day become so elastic and so stretched a word that it means nothing, and yet under its banner are enlisted the hosts of the self-deceived, the dependent, the selfish who because of selfishness are accorded nothing; and the scheming who hope to rise to power on the backs of the weak, blind many.

Constance, however, was too sick of her own woes to puzzle out their meaning in relation to her fellows, or even yet to see that the solution lay within herself entirely and not outside there, even in this wasted and oppressed east side, which appealed so poignantly to her sensitive woman's heart.

She was walking down Avenue A, in the upper twenties, almost before she knew it, paying but scant attention to her surroundings, absorbed in her own thoughts, but wondering if she might not finish everything in the river that lay so near beyond. Suddenly, however, she fairly bumped into a woman who was backing out of a doorway, talking to someone she was leaving behind.

"Pardon me," she said, stepping aside, without looking closely at the woman, but an exclamation arrested her.

"Well! I declare!" said the stranger.

Constance now paid closer attention and discovered that she had almost knocked over a gray-haired woman in whose arms was a baby. Moreover the woman was well, though plainly dressed, and there was a breeding and refinement in her face which said she did not belong in that part of town.

"I'm ever so sorry," said Constance. "Did I hurt you? Couldn't I help you with the baby?" Immediately she became interested in the ruddy and cooing form which the older woman held in her arms.

"Oh, dear me, no. I'm just taking the little fellow down into the next block. Changing homes, that's all. This dear baby got into the wrong place, by mistake, and I'm setting him right."

"Setting him right? What do you mean?" asked Constance, loath to leave the child from her sight.

"I'll tell you. Are you going my way?" replied the older woman, whose kindly face was now wholly concerned again with the child. "But I must not stand here, or the little fellow might catch cold."

"Yes. Please let me carry him. I'll promise not to hurt him. I'll be so careful with him—and you do need a rest," pleaded Con-

stance, suddenly overcome with a desire to hold a child in her arms.

The elderly woman smiled. "Very well," she said, "take him. It's not far. Come along, I'll show you."

CHAPTER XIX

ANOTHER SOLUTION

CONSTANCE carried the child nearly four blocks, and her companion finally said: "Here's the place!" She was disappointed the distance were not twice as much, for—lo!—the infant had clutched the frill of her collar and had nestled his head soundly against her breast, with a sigh of content, and this was so very near like Bobby's best manner that it was uncanny. She was oblivious of the time or distance; she only knew she was happy with a content that had not been hers since she had left her home.

"Let me have him now. I'm quite rested, thank you," said her gray-haired companion, and Constance released her charge with an odd wince of resentment.

They entered the only clean-looking domicile in the block, and were greeted by a thin, elderly woman of direct, sweet manner who wore cheap but neat clothes, and who seemed much constrained, but nevertheless elated. She took the child with what was to Constance almost an

animal cry of delight, at first holding it with tender, awed care as if it were some fragile pottery, and, at length, clutching it fiercely to her breast; so fiercely, in fact, that the baby began to cry.

The cry wiped away all constraint among the women, each of the three immediately hovering over the infant, striving to soothe it, and, in a moment, losing all sense of strangeness or varying social values, and each entering on a determined, though polite, contest for the privilege of quieting the cries.

Out of this contest the third woman came triumphant, as was quite natural, for she not only had original possession but immediately demonstrated her motherly tact and fitness by so coddling and cooing the bone of contention that it speedily grasped *her* collar and nestled contentedly against *her* breast, much to the secret envy of Constance, but to the evident satisfaction of the gray-haired woman.

The two elderly women now disappeared in an inner room, after excusing themselves from Constance, who found herself alone in a tiny parlor, with a gramophone in one corner, some artificial flowers under a glass case in another, a Grand Rapids settee and two quartered oak rockers—the evident home of a frugal workman with a careful housewife.

Soon the gray-haired woman returned, say-

ing: "Ah! This is delightful—more, even, than I hoped for. It is all right now. The baby is in a good place. Let us go."

Once on the street and walking toward the center of town the older woman introduced herself. "I am Mrs. Marshall," she said, "And I want to thank you, though I must say I don't like to let those children out of my arms once they get in. Heigho!" She sighed, with a mixture of regret and content.

"I am Mrs. Rudd," said Constance, and then could restrain her curiosity no longer, "I thought the baby was yours?"

Mrs. Marshall laughed merrily. "Heavens, no, but I almost wish it were."

"Was that the mother?"

Now Mrs. Marshall explained at length, her face becoming quite serious. "I believe she will be a mother in very truth," she said. "That poor little fellow is an orphan. We put him out a month ago in that place where you first saw me—an Italian baker's. A few days ago I received word that he was not being treated properly. I investigated and found that we had somehow been misinformed about the place. It was not the proper home for a child; the mother was slovenly, the father drank. So I looked up this last place, from which we have had an application for a boy child, like this, for more than a month, and de-

cided to change the child's home. We reserve that privilege for the first year and we take advantage of it, if, for any reason, we deem the new home undesirable. That little place we just left strikes me as being a good home. What did you think of it?"

"It seemed well kept and the woman was a dear."

"Precisely. Her husband is a cobbler. They've lived there twelve years, and their record is A 1. They have one grown daughter, married last year, and the woman is lonely without a child, and has passed the age when she can hope for another. I feel sure they will make a good home for that boy."

Constance was impatient to ask more questions, and now saw an opportunity. "Might I ask what you are—what you mean by all this—this beautiful espionage, this Good Samaritan way you have of looking after poor children, and, more wonderful than that, of knowing *how* to take care of them?"

Mrs. Marshall laughed merrily. She had a large, wholesome motherly manner which disarmed criticism and envy, and which immediately inspired Constance with a deep trust. "I am the secretary of the Home Finding Society," she said. "Our business is to find homes for destitute children. I don't very often do the actual work of investigation myself. We

have agents for that, but the three now on my staff happen to be out of the city at present. We dislike to place children in New York. The city is not the place for a child. Still we sometimes have to do it, and there are places, like that one we just left, which are perhaps all right. This woman assures me she will be able to go into the country in the summer and board at some little farm up-state. Of course the New York schools are very good and the child can have them in the winter. If the summer problem is solved a New York home is occasionally accepted. I don't see how we could have permitted the mistake with that Italian baker, though one of our best agents recommended him. We need another agent. Three are not enough. Oh! We could use twenty easily, but our resources are limited. However, we can afford one more agent now, and I am going to recommend immediately that one be found."

By this time they had reached Madison Avenue and Mrs. Marshall stopped in front of an old brown stone house, saying; "I am delighted to have met you, Mrs. Rudd. Come in and see me some time. Our offices are in here—on the first floor. Good day!" And she disappeared briskly up the steps.

Constance stood and watched her until the door closed behind her. With difficulty she re-

strained an impulse to follow her immediately. Finally, however, she walked off to the Dolly Madison, which was only a few blocks away, strangely elated and confident, yet fearful that she should not wait another hour before turning back to see Mrs. Marshall again, for her mind was already made up as to what she should do now, if the chance only could be had.

Once back in her room, however, she decided that it would be better to wait until the next day, for then her action would have less of the appearance of impulse. The intervening time she spent in luxuriously recalling the cling of that baby's hand on the frill of her collar, which *almost* served to wipe out the sting of the letter from Mrs. Leicester's secretary. As she lay in bed that night, waiting for sleep to come, she could not fail to reflect that at last she had found an occupation to entirely fill the heart of a woman, an occupation which would make her independent, in which she could retain her self-respect and which, above all, would be *noble*. She remembered, with a shudder, how she had descended to trickery and humiliation in opposing the police in a vain attempt to help those poor east side girls. With even deeper disgust she thought of the pretense and folly of the Full Franchisers; her vanity being here affected the pain was sharper.

Recurrently she thought of Arthur. Why not

go back to him? He seemed disposed to meet her at least half way, and she could not deny that, down deep in her heart, was a terrible longing for him. Yet his curious silence, his curt reserve, his insistence, though purely negative, on his original conduct, was something she could not forgive.

Her stubborn pride stood there barring the way to her return. She would never return until he showed a more complete submission. So far he had foiled her, in every way, and this made her all the more determined not to give in now. That she had foiled herself she would not admit. Every experience she had had, every train of thought she entertained, however devious, she always managed to trace back to Arthur's door, and she laid the burden there, without compunction, just as she had always left the housekeeping bills to him, without worry. No. She could not return to him. He was too deeply in the wrong.

The result of all this thinking was that she slept only by snatches, so impatient was she again to see Mrs. Marshall, and she conjured up many useless forebodings that that good woman might not be in her office in the morning. She might be out of town. She might already have found the new agent which she had so casually mentioned.

Her fears, however, were groundless.

Promptly at nine o'clock the following morning, when she presented herself in the office on the first floor of the brown stone house she found the motherly, gray-haired woman already at her desk, plentifully occupied with her mail.

"Well, Mrs. Rudd," exclaimed the secretary, who seemed, in herself, encompassing enough to be a whole society, "I hardly expected to see you again so soon, but I am delighted. Sit down. This is a busy place, but we are glad to see our friends at any time."

"Mrs. Marshall," said Constance, almost breathlessly, "I have come to apply for a position with you. I want to find homes for children. It seems to me the most beautiful work in the world. I have fallen utterly in love with it—since yesterday. No. Don't tell me I am impulsive. When I find what I want I *know* it! I shall just *insist* that you let me help you. I'll do anything—*anything*—if I only get a chance to do, perhaps occasionally, what we—what *you* did yesterday. I can't imagine a greater work—"

Mrs. Marshall's merry laugh pealed out, joyously. "We have had many converts!" she exclaimed, "But not one quite so—er—generous as you. I am delighted." Then she became more serious. "Tell me about yourself," she said.

Constance had anticipated this question, and had carefully planned what explanation to make. It must be the truth, but not *all* the truth. Being thus prepared her answer bore the mark of sincerity. She was separated from her husband, she said; perhaps temporarily, perhaps permanently; she did not know about that; she permitted a dignified silence to cover that matter with a mantle of charity in which the halo of martyrdom was assumed without any apparent desire to appear heroic. She treated her husband with a supreme and superb silence, but she mentioned her father's name, and at this Mrs. Marshall looked at her shrewdly, on the point of asking further questions, although she restrained herself. The long and short of the matter was that she required employment, and that her heart was set on this. She discreetly said nothing whatever of her own child, and was much relieved and very grateful that Mrs. Marshall asked no questions which would have compelled her to reveal that she was a mother, for she had decided that she would be obliged to tell the truth about this, too, if the matter were mentioned.

Finally Mrs. Marshall said, seriously; "You see I am not in a position to offer you anything, or even to encourage you. The idea that you might become one of us—in this way—was far from my thoughts yesterday. However, it is

true that we require another agent, and that we will probably engage one very soon. The executive committee is to meet here this afternoon, and will take up the question at that time. Now, I will file your application, and it will be acted upon promptly, I can assure you that much, but I do not want to encourage you, or to keep you from looking elsewhere for work, if you are really in need of it."

"Oh! I am not so *desperately* in need of work."

"That is good. Moreover, you should know, even before I take your application, that the salary is very little—"

"The payment in satisfaction is very much."

"I like to hear you say that. It is the way to feel. Still, one who has been accustomed to—" Mrs. Marshall surveyed her caller with a friendly glance that was not without shrewdness, and added, "to—well, the best of everything might find the stipend we pay our agents insufficient."

"I am sure it would be enough—"

"It would only be enough barely to live and to provide for only quite reasonable expenses."

"That would be a great plenty. What more could one want?"

Mrs. Marshall smiled indulgently. She had had talks like this before, but, in the back of her head, she was holding the mental reservation

that she had not before had such a talk with the daughter of a prominent state senator whose influence, as she well knew, was of vital importance to women in that state. She meant to lay this fact before the committee and had already resolved that she would welcome this frank-spoken and attractive young woman, so modishly gowned, even if she were apparently impulsive and inexperienced. But, what she said was:

"You would have to travel, you know?"

"Oh!" said Constance.

"Yes, though perhaps not at first. Eventually, however, your service as a home finding agent would be valueless if you did not travel."

Constance was vaguely alarmed, but concealed her alarm. "Where?" she asked.

"Into the interior of the state, to farms and small towns, even into other states. It is in the country we find the best homes."

"I should like that," said Constance firmly. "If my expenses were paid."

"We pay all *necessary* expenses," concluded Mrs. Marshall, in a business-like manner. "Now, run along for to-day—that is a good girl—and come to see me to-morrow. I don't promise, you understand, but I will not keep you waiting, in any event."

That afternoon, for the first time, Mrs. Marshall *urged* the executive committee to employ

a new agent of her choice, saying: "It is unusual for me to do this, as you know, and I have no sounder reason for making my suggestion than just intuition." She laughed. "A woman's intuition. Still, as our affairs would be ill run without trusting frequently to that same sort of judgment, I feel that you will not misjudge me this time." For Mrs. Marshall, who bore practically the whole burden of the society, to make a suggestion, was almost equal to a command. Yet she was employed on a very modest salary, which was her sole income, and the women with whom she was dealing were all wealthy and if the executive skill each imagined she possessed were combined in one prodigy that person would be capable of regulating all governments, single-handed. However, they left the affairs of the Home Finding Society to Mrs. Marshall.

Promptly the next morning at nine o'clock Constance again presented herself to the secretary.

"Well," said Mrs. Marshall, "I have good news for you. While I am not instructed by the committee to offer you a permanent position, I am permitted to employ you, temporarily, for two weeks. In that time if, in my judgment, you are the person we require, my recommendation will be sufficient, I believe, to secure for you a permanent position; provided, of

course, you are still in the mind to accept it."

Constance could only murmur: "Oh! I thank you! I am so happy! I believe I have a lucky star, after all."

"And now, for these two weeks, you will work right here in the city, under my direction. This is no easy work. It requires much skill, and experience is what you need more than all else. You will not mind my saying to you, for I believe you have had little experience in practical life, that the greatest trouble with women to-day is their exaggerated idea of what they can do which contrasts sadly with their real capabilities—in certain lines, I mean."

"But this is such a natural work for a woman," objected Constance.

Mrs. Marshall smiled indulgently. "It requires time and patience and discretion even to learn to do natural work. Common sense is not common, you know."

"Certainly," said Constance, impatient to go out immediately and repeat her experience of two days before, and somehow vaguely distressed at the formality and the hesitation with which this new effort was being approached. It had not been so difficult with the Franchisers or the Suffragists. When she had approached them it had seemed that everything were possible for her, without delay, simply because she *wished* to do it. She could go out and overturn

society, baffle the police, make laws, impress mankind and exalt herself as easily as she could buy a pair of shoes. Yet here, where she was to do so simple and natural and ordinary a thing as to find a home for a destitute child they talked of training, of a patient wait, of slowly gained experience, of tact and suppression, and much more which even now Mrs. Marshall was beginning to impress upon her.

However, she would not be so ungracious as to show that she was impatient at a restraint that was doubtless kindly meant, for she felt loyal and grateful to Mrs. Marshall. So she spent the morning in the office reading, under Mrs. Marshall's direction, a dry book of rules and regulations, a dryer tabulation of the cases that had been treated by the society and other similar societies, a long typewritten report of conditions in farm homes, and much else that only wearied her but which she strove, nevertheless, to understand. When noon came she was weary, and already a trifle non-plussed. This was not quite so exciting as tumbling from one distressed home to another with a wonderful infant in her arms. Still, Mrs. Marshall had hinted that in a few days she could start out on a real adventure of mercy, and she looked forward eagerly to that.

As she passed out for lunch she found herself in the vicinity of the Old Mother Hubbard, and

thought she would go there for a bite to eat, as she did not wish to stay long away from the office. She had no more than seated herself when Miss Rivers came in, and, with an exclamation of gladness, joined her.

The situation was very embarrassing for Constance. She felt under a certain indebtedness to Miss Rivers, and yet had no desire to see her. She did not want to explain all that had happened to her, and yet she did not know on what grounds she could avoid the bachelor woman who had been so ostensibly kind. In spite of herself she was agreeable, even chummy, it seemed to her.

"Do tell me what you are doing now. I've lost sight of you," said the bachelor woman, with a most friendly manner. "I knew it was wrong for Miss Hunter to send you down there on the east side with Ruth Vance and those Indians, and I don't blame you for leaving. That is no place for a lady to live."

Constance was grateful that no more intimate questions were asked, and so she quickly thought to change the conversation by saying, ingenuously: "Yes, I found an opportunity for work which seems just as helpful, perhaps more so, and I came up here to be close to it."

"What is it?" exclaimed Miss Rivers, eagerly.

"I've become an agent for the Home Finding

Society," said Constance proudly, conveniently ignoring her history with Mrs. Leicester.

The bachelor woman showed signs of distress. "What!" she cried.

Constance repeated the account of the occupation, striving to leave the impression that she had been in her new work for a long time. Miss Rivers was now palpably crestfallen. "What is the matter with that?" Constance asked, with an inclination to petulance.

"The matter! Why, child, don't you know?"

Now Constance was alarmed. "No," she said ingenuously, and the bachelor woman could no longer doubt her sincerity.

"Why!" exclaimed Miss Rivers, with a snort of disdain. "Those anti-suffragists!"

"Antis!"

"To be sure. Didn't you know it?"

"Of course not. I never dreamed it."

"The worst sort."

"I can't believe it." Constance was really dumbfounded. Throughout her stay in the various suffrage camps she had heard the "antis" referred to in terms of direst disgust, until she had come to associate them, almost, with abandoned women. "You must be mistaken," she insisted.

"Don't you suppose I *know*?"

"But their work is so *fine*—getting homes for those poor, destitute orphans."

Miss Rivers smiled with ineffable contempt. "It's just a dodge. They're really traitors to the sex. They care nothing for babies. They all have poodle dogs. That's only their clever way of diverting attention from their laziness, their downright selfishness. They don't want to vote because it means *effort*. They haven't the slightest interest in the welfare of their sisters. Even if they *do* help a few poor children what does that amount to? Merely patching things up a bit, when, if they stood out bravely and gloriously for the enfranchisement of the sex we women would find a way, *by law*, to take care of the children."

"What way?" said Constance, weakly, snatching at straws.

"Oh! We'd find a way. That would come later. The *vote* is the important thing," replied Miss Rivers, with mounting indignation.

"But they seem so sincere and earnest," remonstrated Constance, distressed, unhappy, her fine little card house of hopes now all in ruins.

"*Seem!* Yes. That's a good word." Miss Rivers turned on her friend, with shaking sarcasm. "If it were not for those women," she shouted, in an effective imitation of the manner of Amy Dart, "we would have had the vote long ago. They are pilferers of our rights. Traitors to their sex! A shame to womankind!"

"Oh!" cried Constance, horrified.

"Go and ask them if they want to vote. You'll see!"

With this parting shot Miss Rivers rose abruptly and left her recruit in despair.

In a few minutes Constance followed, resolved to seek Mrs. Marshall and there disprove these terrible slanders. As she rushed on another sick wave of disillusion swept over her. Was she never to reach her haven? Who possibly could have foreseen *this* cloven hoof in a situation outwardly so angelic?

CHAPTER XX :

STRANGE REAPPEARS

Mrs. MARSHALL was at her desk, writing, when Constance came in, weary, unhappy, all but desperate. "Why!" she exclaimed, on looking up, and thrusting out a sympathetic hand with which she clasped the other's arm. "You look ill, Mrs. Rudd. What is the matter with you?"

With an effort Constance gained control of herself, for on again seeing this motherly woman who had been so more than kind to her, she had partially regained her poise, while the loyalty which was the keynote of her nature, when properly awakened, came to the surface. Now she spoke calmly, much to her own surprise.

"I just met a friend," she said, "who told me that—" She paused, then asked the abrupt question; suddenly reflecting that it was cowardly not to assume the burden of the accusation herself: "Tell me, is this an anti-suffrage society? I don't believe it, Mrs. Marshall, but I simply *had* to to ask you."

The gray-haired woman leaned back in her

chair and shook with merriment. She did not know exactly what had happened, but she readily divined much. In a moment, however, seeing that her new assistant was deeply affected, she became serious, and answered, directly:

"No, my dear."

A load seemed suddenly lifted from Constance's shoulders. "Oh! I was sure of it!" she sighed, and she turned to Mrs. Marshall enthusiastically, exclaiming: "Of course you believe in woman suffrage, don't you?"

Again the indulgent smile. "No, my dear, I do not," said the elderly secretary.

Everything was now too complex and mystifying. Constance had supposed the only antis were drones like Kate Werther or old-fashioned women like Mrs. Bolston. For a woman earning her living, and in so unselfish a manner; moreover a woman of character and judgment not to believe in this "enfranchisement of the sex" (though she herself was not yet *quite* sure what "enfranchisement" meant) was beyond her comprehension. She could only sit and stare, dumbfounded, at her benefactress.

"Someone has told you that this is an anti-society, is that the trouble?" asked Mrs. Marshall.

"Yes," assented Constance weakly, and then suddenly reflected that she had resolved to tell the truth to this woman, so she added, hastily,

and with a hint of bravado: "And I belong myself to—" she hesitated. To what did she belong, the Full Franchisers or the Suffragists? And what was the difference, or was there a difference? She covered her confusion by compromising with the statement:

"I am a suffragist."

Mrs. Marshall became quite grave, as she said: "Many say that this is an anti society for the reason that all the members of our board of directors are prominent members, also, of either one or the other of the two anti-suffrage organizations, but, as a matter of fact, suffrage has nothing whatever to do with our work here. We have nothing to do here with the voting of women. We dabble in politics occasionally, when it seems necessary for the children, but in the approved way, which is far more effective for us than in wasting our time asking for the vote."

Constance hardly heard this so impatient was she to ask the question deeply troubling her. Finally she got it out. "Then, I suppose, I can't work for you, being a suffragist?"

Again the hearty laugh from Mrs. Marshall. There was a radiating warmth in that laugh, consoling, cheering, although Constance was inclined to take offense at it, for it was palpably expressed at her ignorance, though any stirring of envy, jealousy or resentment that

ever came to her was dispelled by the laugh as fog is by the sun.

"It doesn't make the slightest difference to us, dear child, what you believe, so long as you do the work we have to be done here, and do it creditably. After all, getting the work done is the important thing," said Mrs. Marshall, and as she talked she became serious again. "The principal reason I'm against suffrage is that it interferes with a woman's true work. Were it not for the suffrage agitation, brought about by these misguided women, many in this society, who oppose it only through a stern sense of duty, would have more time for what is their real work. I, myself, pay as little attention as possible to it."

"And you don't believe in woman suffrage! I can hardly understand that," reiterated Constance, vastly relieved, yet still troubled, and clinging fondly to her original shock.

"Few working women do!"

"Really?"

The odd little indulgent smile came to Mrs. Marshall's face to replace the merry laugh. "If you go into this work heartily and come in contact with the women who are really filling a worthy place in the world you will find that my statements are very conservative."

"But I thought every woman, nearly, in New York, believed in suffrage." This seemed quite

true to Constance, absorbed as she had been now for weeks, with the zeal of a convert, in the hysteria of a frothy wave of feminine excitement.

Mrs. Marshall looked gravely out of the window, then back to her new assistant. "Let me tell you something about myself," she said, with reminiscent mellowness, and Constance was drawn toward her as she had been to none of the women she had known recently, for she felt, for the first time, that someone had a *motherly* interest in her welfare. Constance looked assent, not trusting herself to speech, and Mrs. Marshall continued:

"When I first found that I had to provide a living for myself—that was ten years ago—I turned naturally to the suffragists. The movement was not so fashionable then as it is now. There were no Mrs. Graydons or Mrs. Leicesters in it then. The leaders were determined maiden women mostly, with a few who were widows, such as I, and more who were widows in a way that I would never be. But I was with them, then, heart and soul. I thought it was a righteous movement. As I had to earn my living it seemed natural that I should have a right to vote. But I have a practical mind, unfortunately, and before I was in it long I began asking questions that no one seemed able to answer. What would women do

if they did vote? What could we actually accomplish? And I found that none of the women who were spending their days and nights beseeching men to let them vote had any answer to those questions. When pinned right down to it they always evaded, and stuck out for the abstract "right." Then I asked myself if voting was really a *right*, anyway. It took time; it took experience that none of these women seemed willing to acquire before they voted. In fact, it is a *responsibility*—voting is—not a *right*. It is a duty, not a privilege. This reasoning gave me a glimmer of the truth in showing me that men in refusing to let us vote were not oppressing us, but were, in the kindest way possible, protecting us. '

"But it wasn't reasoning that convinced me. I had become interested in child welfare work and was earning a modest living in connection with a church home mission. In working on the east side I found that there was an old law on the statute books about truancy which did a great deal of harm to the poor children I was trying to help. I felt it ought to be repealed. Naturally the first thing I thought of was to seek the coöperation of the woman suffrage society to which I belonged, to bring this about. Do you think those women would work with me for that very necessary and obvious reform? Not at all. They contended that they recog-

nized only one wrong, which they called the 'slavery' of women, the classing them with 'imbeciles, criminals and Chinamen'—what a degrading slur, not only on themselves, but on the true, kind, brave men who have made the laws that govern society! At any rate, I became speedily disgusted with those woman suffragists, but not to the extent of changing my belief until I took upon myself the work of getting a group of women together who would go with me to Albany and present to the legislature a proper appeal for the changing of that old obsolete law.

"That first trip to Albany was a liberal education. I had heard how the men had spurned the woman suffragists when they went demanding the right to vote; how they had been rude, scornful, even contemptuous; and I had made up my mind to meet such treatment as best I could, knowing I was on an errand of mercy for poor children. Imagine my surprise when a committee was appointed to hear what we had to say, when we were graciously received, attentively heard, complimented and finally thanked publicly; the conclusion to all of which was that the bill I had so quietly advocated was passed almost unanimously. Not a word had been *said* of woman's 'rights,' but women had exerted their full rights. Their word as to the care of the

children had been accepted, almost without a question.

“It was that trip to Albany which changed me. I remembered what my father had done for me, the willing sacrifices he had made to give me an education, how nothing had been too ‘good’ for me, how he had always heeded and granted every request I had made; that is, every one he possibly could. And my husband had accorded me every protection, every privilege I had ever sought. Thus was confirmed my earlier reasoning, that it was not hostility for us, but the truest and kindest concern which prevented men from thrusting upon women this dreadful ballot which they hardly know how to use themselves. I thought of the old Arab story of the magician who commanded the elements with a magic wand, of how his servant one day found that wand in the library and proceeded to wave it as he had seen his master do, of how instantly he had been consumed with lightning, for he had neglected to observe that his master had used the wand with his *left* hand, while he had picked it up with his *right*! That, I concluded, is what would happen to women, and, perhaps, to men, too, if women had the ballot.

“Then, as I read and listened and thought, I discovered more. I found that during the Civil War the only women’s societies which did

not help in a womanly way, by nursing, by tying bandages, by supplying food, were the suffragists. They, alone, held aloof in that terrible period. And I wondered what would happen to-day if a war came to us again. Would these women who are parading the streets, shouting from public platforms, filling the newspapers with their unreasonable cries be the ones to nurse the wounds, to care for the homeless children, to send words of precious cheer to the fighting men? Or would it be the quiet, unobtrusive women who care nothing about voting, but who know more about it than do those who claim to care?

"So, I just naturally dropped out of that suffrage society. I was too busy about that time, anyway, with real issues to bother with such nonsense. Then, when the antis, as they are ungraciously called, began to form, I one day joined them, for it seemed to me that if I had any little influence I owed it to my country to spare it from what I believe would be a terrible burden.

"No, my dear," concluded the kindly, gray-haired woman, "I am not a suffragist because I have gone too deeply into the question. I feel sorry for the men of the country who will have to face this problem, squarely, sooner or later. They have brought it on themselves, I regret to say. Not by oppressing women; but

by being too kind to them. Not by refusing them anything, but by giving them too much. Not by taking away any 'rights'; but by giving them too many 'privileges.' They have turned the heads of the women; have flattered them; have given them too much leisure; have taken all the work on their own shoulders; have permitted them to evade woman's one great 'right,' that of having children; in short, have so pampered and spoiled them that they are now being bitten by those who should feel only kindly toward them. If women want to work men let them work; if women want to play they let them play; whatever women want to do they do; and, if enough of them say they want to vote the men will be weak and foolish enough to let them do that, too. God help us all! Meanwhile, it is my belief that every true woman owes a duty in letting her voice be heard against this outrageous and unjustified rebellion!

"And now let us get to work, and please forgive a woman old enough to be your mother for loosing this on you all at once. You are under no obligation to agree with me. Only one thing I do demand—that your work be done conscientiously."

As Constance rose, impressed, silent, Mrs. Marshall said, before turning to her work; "My dear, I know what you are going through. I

have been through it myself, and if ever I can be of help I want you to feel that my heart is open to you."

Constance murmured a "thank you!" and turned to some papers which had been given her to assort. The emotions which possessed her were too conflicting; her head was too startled by a new line of thought to permit much speech. All that afternoon she seemed to be in a daze. She had not ceased to be a woman suffragist; not by any means, but she was thinking. The memory of that afternoon was to last with her for many a year.

She was thinking of her father, especially, and of her husband, also. She was asking herself if Mrs. Marshall had not fairly described them when she referred, with mingled tenderness and criticism, to "the men of the country."

Two days later Mrs. Marshall told her that a letter had come in from a family on the east side, near Stuyvesant Square, in the old part of town which had once been fashionable, asking for a child to adopt. It was from a man and his wife, of middle-age, who said they were in a position to adopt a little boy, if one to answer their description could be found, and that they hoped their application would be considered. It was to be Constance's first duty to call on this couple, to ascertain their general character and standing, and to question them

more closely as to the nature of the child they desired. Mrs. Marshall thought she had a child in mind that might suit them.

Constance spent two days in this investigation and finally reported that it was a favorable home. Meanwhile, she had been delighted to go to the Orphan's Home, on the upper end of the Island to see the child, in company with the prospective new parents. It all had proved absurdly simple. The couple were delighted with the boy, who seemed to respond readily to them and when the transfer was made Mrs. Marshall herself came down to the home near the Square, with Constance, and made out the papers so that Constance could see how it was done.

When it was all over, and the little boy had been safely left in a new home that gave every promise of being a happy refuge, infinitely superior to the cramped and blighting conditions in the asylum, Mrs. Marshall said, on their way uptown;

"There! I think you're fairly initiated. I can see that this work is going to agree with you, and you with it!" Constance felt rapturously satisfied, and had it not been for her inability to rid herself of the idea that suffrage, after all, was a necessary thing for women, she would have been content. But somehow, it seemed disloyal to Mrs. Marshall

that she could not agree with her, although she felt utterly unable to answer the arguments she had heard a few days before. Argument, anyhow, had never been her stronghold. In college she had never joined the debating society; always she had been content to listen to others. Frequently she had been distressed to find herself agreeing with *both* sides. This was now her situation, and when she confronted it, she was horribly distressed.

Whenever she had an opportunity she ran down to what she laughingly called, "My first home," for a chat with the new mother and a look at the baby. Once the baby asked her her name and she replied "Constance." Since that she was always, to him, "Conthanth," and this never failed to delight her.

One afternoon she had an errand over in the Houston Street district and as she boarded a car on Sixth Avenue to ride there, she was distressed to find that Tilly Drury was on the seat behind her. She hoped he had not noticed her, but this was a vain hope, for he came immediately forward and sat down beside her.

"Well, Mrs. Rudd," he said, "Do you know that this is the happiest day of my life!" He was very gay, extravagant as ever.

"That's silly," she said, impulsively impolite, not deigning to treat him even coquetishly.

"No. Tilly," he replied, flippantly.

She made no response, but answered his questions in monosyllables, until, when they reached Houston Street, she got off to go on her errand to a home where she was to look into the condition of a child who had been placed there a few months before.

He got off, too. "Look here," he said, "This is just tea time. Wouldn't it be jolly to go into Tanti's for tea—do you suppose Tanti knows the difference between tea and dago red?"

She *was* a bit tired. Moreover, she did not wish to let him think that she had any feeling for him at all, either of repugnance or of liking, so she acquiesced.

Soon they were at the rear table where she had sat those three evenings with Ruth Vance and Strange. Drury had a fussy time with the waiter, making his wants known, but he was unable to get the oolong he wanted, and compromised on a cocktail. Constance said she wouldn't have a cocktail, but when the waiter brought two she sipped one of them.

Drury, meanwhile, was looking at her, with a quizzical smile. "I do wish you had followed my advice," he broke in, without, as Constance thought, properly introducing the subject.

She pursed her lips, striving to assume an air which would seem trifling, for she did not

care to admit that she *could* be hurt by such a thing as had happened at Mrs. Ledgate's.

"I'm not used to being snubbed," she replied.

"You were not snubbed," he laughed, in answer.

"Perhaps not, but it felt that way."

"Oh! No. You were snobbed."

He snickered, but she did not notice him, for her attention had been arrested by a man who had just entered the door. Tilly looked up to follow her interest and saw a tall, blonde, wide-shouldered fellow, talking to Madame Tanti.

"You know him?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, absent-mindedly, starting to get up, "But I must be hurrying on."

At that moment the new-comer turned, and she subsided, hoping he would not notice them, and that then she could get away without an encounter. Instead, he came directly for their table.

"Who is it?" whispered Tilly, "He seems to be a fair young cove, and he knows you."

"It is John Strange!" she ejaculated.

CHAPTER XXI

AT BAY

WITH a coolly estimating smile Drury watched Strange approach. "The *sexualis criminis* type," he said to himself as he noted the large, loose-hanging lips, the protuberant ears, the ham-like hands dangling from long wrists with sinuous ease which belied their clumsy appearance. And there was a sly assurance mingled with a modest assumption of superiority which gave a curious air of refinement to the tailors' walking delegate, who seemed a fantastic mixture of the brute and the gentleman. Drury, the dilettante, was amused and interested, and doubly so when he saw that there was some secret connection between the newcomer and this charming, ingenuous young woman whom he had thought so unsophisticated.

Constance was astonished that Strange should present himself. She would have thought he might have had the decency not to force himself on her again, but, as he walked forward so confidently, she lacked the decision to ignore him. It was not in her nature to be

rude to anyone. She might have been able to order the execution of a Chinaman who had offended her, if he were ten thousand miles away, and the deed required but a thought on her part and could be performed with the certainty that no one would know it; but to "cut" offending persons had not been taught in her gentle upbringing.

This weakness had foisted Tilly upon her. Now it let in Strange, but she smiled to herself when she reflected that there was safety in numbers, anyway, and, she would remain but a minute.

"It is good to see you in this part of town, Mrs. Rudd," said Strange, offering his hand.

"Thank you. Mr. Strange, this is Mr. Drury. We thought we would try Tanti's for some tea," she replied, nonchalantly.

The men shook hands, and Drury looked to Constance, expecting her to invite Strange to join them, but, as she did not do so, he did not intrude.

"And could you get what you wanted?" asked Strange, ignoring the lack of an invitation, standing easily with one hand on the back of Constance's chair, to her annoyance, which she concealed.

"No," she answered, "but—no matter—we were just about to go."

"Oh! Not at all," expostulated Strange, lifting his hand, impressively, without smiling, "I'm very fond of tea myself, and I always keep a little here. Madame Tanti has it locked up. I get it in Chinatown from a friend of mine there. It's a blend of Formosa and Burmese. It's a heady tea, but very fine. The big merchants of the Six Companies import it for their own special use. Come in the back room and I'll have it brought in."

Constance started to remonstrate, but Drury exclaimed; "Oh! Bully! Lead us to it!"

"Why not have it right here?" said Constance.

"Because," said Strange, "there's a samovar in the back room, and Tanti never lets me brew my tea out here, anyway. He says it would drive all the dagos out of the place. You have to go to the Orient or north of the Breton cape to find tea drinkers. The Neopolitans abhor it."

By this time Strange was leading the way, and the others were following him. The room was an ill-lighted place. Strange struck a match and turned on a gas jet. In one corner was a round black, bare table, in another an old couch, and behind it, on a box, reposed a samovar, thrown there, like so much junk. Strange fished this out and set it on the table. Meanwhile he had given some orders to a

waiter who was bringing him his tea, water and some bread and cups.

"What a treasure of a retreat!" exclaimed Drury, looking about, "A regular pirates' den! If Tanti would fit this place up, advertise it, serve a fifty cent table d'hote and have brigands for waiters he would make a fortune." He looked into another corner. "What's this!" he exclaimed, picking up a wicked looking knife, with a long, triangular blade.

Strange looked at it casually, replying; "It's Tanti's cheese knife. Look out! It's sharp. There's another way Tanti could make a fortune;—by teaching razor people how to sharpen steel."

Drury was surveying the knife, poising his fingers above the edge. "Why does he want a cheese knife *sharp*? I should think the duller it was the better it would be."

"Not at all," responded Strange, who was now brewing the tea, "Not for slicing the rind off Gruyere that costs three dollars a pound."

Drury seemed fascinated with the knife. He took out his handkerchief and poised it above the blade. "Now," he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, observe the Great Cagliostro. He will proceed to pass a linen handkerchief—at least I bought it for linen; it may be cotton—through a steel knife." With that he dropped the handkerchief. It fluttered to the floor, and

Drury stooped to pick it up, thinking he had missed the knife. But he picked up two handkerchiefs.

"Suffering cats!" he cried, dropping the knife back where he had found it, "That's enough for me. I wouldn't *have* a razor as sharp as that. It might accidentally amputate my pretty eyelashes when I wasn't looking."

Strange smiled grimly and Constance sipped hurriedly at her tea, hoping that she would soon find an opportunity to leave. Had she seen Strange alone she would never have come here with him, but she wished to preserve her good manners before Drury who still represented to all that she had lost in Mrs. Leicester's society.

She looked from one man to the other, fascinated. Each repelled her, yet each attracted her. There was a slim, febrile grace in Drury, together with an uncanny divination of her moods, which she had found in no man heretofore. What a contrast, she thought, to the manly directness of Arthur, who, in company, showed only a bluff heartiness and never that comfortable quick perception of the underlying personal values in a situation. Yet Drury had no real hold on her. She never felt that she wanted to *touch* him; that was the last thing in the world she would think of in his connec-

tion. She felt as little danger from him as she would have felt if he had been a woman.

With Strange it was different. The thick hair on the back of his hands and wrists; the bunched thickness of the back of his neck; his sluggish movements that seemed to hint of illimitable latent force; his pale, sleeping eyes in which there seemed always smoldering a fire down in the infinite deeps;—all of these phenomena conspired to arrest her attention with almost hypnotic effect. She could not analyze this effect, but she knew it was there, and it disgusted her. She felt impatient with herself that she should have a greater interest in the brute than in the gentleman.

Unfamiliar with the motives which actuate these types of the feminist male who flock to the woman suffrage standards, she was at a loss to account for her weak curiosity in dallying even so long with these men who attracted and repelled her, holding her poised, in *statu quo*, as it were. She was like some object suspended in mid-air by the combined forces of centrifugal and centripetal motion. The forces dragging her in seemed equal to those dragging her out. Gradually she was lulled into a sense of security, for, on top of the cocktail she had taken, the tea was now beginning to get in its work, and it was no such tea as that

to which she was accustomed. It was the strong drink of strong men.

Drury opened his cigarette case and passed it around. Strange lit a cigarette and so did Constance. They both were enthusiastic about the tea. Strange drew a second cup for each, and this second cup had set, so that it was twice as strong as the first. Constance, who had been alarmed at the effect of the cocktail, was now reassured to find that her nerves seemed as if in a vise, and that her head was working with marvelous clearness.

She felt that an accurate vision of the entire suffrage problem was coming to her, as by inspiration. She saw that these men were half women; one of the animal type, the other more refined. She suddenly understood *why* they were suffrage followers. They wormed a way into the good graces of women, where other men worked a way. Where other men commanded they implored. Where other men spoke frankly they flattered. Instead of being honest, efficient and sympathetic they were indirect, evasive and insinuating. Under the guise of a passional equality they practiced free love, enjoying all the privileges and letting all the burdens fall on the women whom they imitated only in weakness and never in strength. One among the proletariat, the other in "society" pursued ways that were practically,

identical, equally corrupt, alike devious, different only in subtlety; a trail of slime spreading evilly behind each as he went.

"Bah!" she exclaimed involuntarily, rising decisively, feeling that she would step from that room now and never see either of them again.

"What's the matter, little sister?" called Drury, rising, too.

"I must go," she said.

"Don't hurry," protested Strange, "We'll get Tanti to make some cakes. I've already given the order."

"No," she protested, "I have business which must be attended to immediately," and started for the door. She was half way there when it opened and Ruth Vance entered.

The two women faced one another for a moment, without speaking a word. Strange looked at them under half-closed lids, and Drury, whistling softly to himself, subsided, again, into his seat.

"Why, Ruth," Constance was the first to speak, "I'm glad to see you." She held out her hand.

Ruth took the proffered hand, while her eyes rested on Tilly Drury. "Mrs. Rudd," she said, with decisive calmness, and a curling of the lower lip. Then she looked Constance cynically in the eyes. "I hardly expected to see you back *so soon!*"

Drury drew in his breath deeply. He had not expected so much sport, for the intrigues and bickerings of women supplied him with nine-tenths of his mental and emotional food.

"I came in for some tea with—" Constance hesitated, then her instinct told her to preserve the amenities and get out as soon as possible. So she stepped back and motioned toward Tilly. "With Mr. Drury—Miss Vance!"

Tilly and Ruth shook hands. Constance started again for the door. "But I was leaving just as you came in."

"Don't leave on *my* account," said Ruth, with a sneer, ignoring Strange, as though he did not exist.

"Come on. Stay a while! Here are the cakes!" exclaimed Tilly, as the waiter entered with a plate of thin, freshly baked macaroons.

Constance, still hoping that she had deceived Drury as to the fact that there was any previous complication among these people and herself, hastily concluded that if she rushed out now she would confirm any suspicions he might have. Moreover, she was, unfortunately, still desirous to hold the respect of Ruth Vance, and hoped, by staying, she might convince that militant young woman that Strange was as nothing to her.

"All right," she said, "For just a minute," and sat down.

But nothing that she expected came to pass. Ruth ignored Strange. Drury ignored her. They immediately became completely absorbed in each other. She was intensely chagrined, and yet she did not dare acknowledge her humiliation by flaunting out as Ruth herself would doubtless have done had the situation been reversed.

She was so bitterly vexed that the tears almost came to her eyes, and she answered some questions that Strange addressed to her, quite in a haze. He was telling her about the macaroons. They were not made of the ordinary flour and sugar, he explained, but of a paste which had been previously baked and then allowed to stand before a new mixture was made. This gave them the combined mellowness and crispness one never found in regular bakeshop macaroons. Ah, Tanti knew how to do things. He talked on, with drawling exactness, his eyes never leaving Constance's flushed face, revealing an intimate knowledge of cookery worthy of a professional.

Constance finally concluded she could stand it no longer, for Tilly and Ruth had not addressed a single remark to her, but were talking low to themselves. She was about to rise abruptly and depart, when, to her utter amazement, Tilly and Ruth rose hastily, made some hurried excuses and left the room.

"Pretty cheeky—eh? What?" exclaimed Strange.

Constance ignored him completely and followed to the door, looking through the crack where it swung on its hinges to see if they left the restaurant. Her idea was that she would follow them instantly as soon as they had disappeared, but she could not bear that either should see her go off alone.

Strange, however, placed a different interpretation on her movement. He attributed it to jealousy. In thus lacking equipment for the coping with a woman like Constance, Strange could never have interested her for any length of time, but the very cheapness of his estimate made the dénouement now most swift, and, for her, utterly startling.

"Come!" said he, placing a hand familiarly on her arm, to lead her back to the table.

His touch made her writhe and she turned on him, the blood receding from her face, her nerves again caught as in a vise, while she seemed to be at a white heat all over, but calm. Her mere look sufficed to make him drop her arm, and she straightened her coat, which gave her a chance to wipe the sleeve where he had touched it, as if a viper had crawled there.

Then she started for the door, but he was there before her, thrusting it shut with a quick movement of his foot and slipping a bolt that

she had not noticed. Then he stood with his back to the door and with her in front of him.

"Are you really so keen about that—that popinjay!" he asked, without smiling, the fire now widening his sleepy eyes.

"Open the door," she said, in a low, calm voice.

"Answer me!" He spoke louder, with a sulky domineering tone that he had found to possess much charm, in passion, with his type of women.

"Open the door, please." Her tone was more quiet than before. It was even conciliating, for she deemed diplomacy a necessary virtue now.

"Not until you answer me."

"Mr. Strange, open the door."

"To see him—never!"

She dropped her eyes, in angry, baffled disgust, but hastily concluded she had still better parley with his boorishness. "I wish you would please open the door."

"Answer my question—"

"Then will you open the door?"

"Yes."

"Then I may as well tell you Mr. Drury is of no concern whatever to me. I only met him by chance this afternoon. I will probably never see him again."

"Ah-h-h!" he breathed deeply, and stood closer to the door, to which she advanced confidently.

"Open, please," she placed her hand on the bolt.

He seized her hand and put his other arm around her. "Do you think I'm fool enough to let you go the second time, when I've got you like this?" he murmured, embracing her.

She struck him now, desperately, with every ounce of strength in her body. First she doubled her fists and hit him in his thick throat. The next blow caught him in the eye and he strove to pinion her arms, but her fury was too much for him. She opened her hands and began to claw his face. She felt that she would like to strip the flesh from his bones.

But he was chuckling to himself, almost maniacally. It was this sort of thing in which he reveled. To fight with a woman, to overpower her, to have his will upon her was the finest climax to passion of which he had any cognizance. In fact, he was of the type of degenerate which finds satisfaction in no other way. Woman resisting; woman contending; woman reviling; woman cursing and clawing;—these were familiar episodes to him. But never before had he come so close to what he called "a lady" and his imagination had dwelt on the opportunity now for weeks. With

latent delight he stealthily observed everything she did and craftily noted her difference from the women he had known. First, she knew how to hit. Her blows had stung. This was usually the woman's weak point. They might strike, but it was always wild. As for the clawing he cynically commented that there alone did she reveal her common inheritance of the feminine weapon. They were all alike there. But she had not screamed, nor offered to scream. This occasioned a dry chuckle. If she did not scream the sign was sure; she wanted no interference. Ah, after all, they were all easy: women were all alike. They all but made a show of resisting to increase the pleasures of the chase. He was almost bored, already, for he had expected something different, something more subtle. He never reflected that she did not scream because she would almost rather lose her honor than endure the odium of a public knowledge of his assault.

Her attack was too vigorous and he let her go, though he still kept his back to the door. She sank into a chair. He felt of his cheeks. There were two gashes in one and one in the other, from all of which the blood was trickling. He looked about and saw the old leather couch in the opposite corner, under the only window in the room.

Constance, too, was hastily looking over the room. She knew that it was mid-afternoon, though the light in the back room was dim, despite the struggling gas-jet. She felt that she might cry out and thus bring help, but she would not do this except in the very uttermost extremity. She feared the police and what she might have to face at the station house.

There was no time to feel her degradation. She was on the battlefield and she had her fight to win first, but, the instincts of many generations of fine women were calling to her, and she determined that she would fight until hope seemed gone, when she would scream for help. But—oh!—if her strength should go too quickly! Had she not better scream now?

She could not decide, and here he was advancing on her, with his pale burning eyes and his slatty yellow lashes; his hairy hands and his loose lips with the blood trickling down on them!

She leaped to her feet before he could get to her and tried to escape toward the side of the room where the cheese knife lay. He intercepted her and took her in his arms, with gigantic care, but, before he closed on her, she brought her fist up stoutly against his jaw, and he loosened his grip, for a brief fraction of a second. She tried to push him over to the wall, and succeeded for a moment, but, imme-

diately, he gathered her in his arms and bore her to the couch.

However, she almost snuggled into his arms so contented was she! In her right hand she grasped the cheese knife, which she had been able to snatch from the table while his back was up against it.

Now he was trying to kiss her. So far she had evaded his kisses. Not once had his lips touched her face, and she squirmed and wriggled under him to still avoid this indignity, but only one hand was free now, for in the other she held the knife, and with one hand she could do little.

From the beginning neither had said a word. The terms of the duel, ancient, universal, was apparently thoroughly understood and they fought it out in silence, though he chuckled to himself, again and again. But now she lay suddenly limp in his arms and he started, at last, to kiss her unresisting lips, when she spoke.

"John Strange!" she said, weakly.

"Yes," he answered, slightly releasing his grip. He knew the signs. It was all over now. She had put up the show of resisting. Now she would give in "like a lady" and all would be well.

But, even as this cynical and self-satisfied thought flashed through his mind, he felt prick

down into his back, through his coat and under garments, the needle like point of the cheese knife.

"I'll put it into your heart—NOW—if you don't get away from me!" She spoke the words, slowly, judiciously, and he melted like fresh wax under a blazing fire; slid down to the floor with an odd cry of anticipated horror, while the knife ripped his coat.

She leaped to her feet and rushed to the door, but he was up and after her. Too late! She slipped the bolt and hurled the knife at his head. He dodged just in time for it to whistle past him, but too late to catch her. She had darted into the outer room.

CHAPTER XXII

THE AWAKENING

IN front of Tanti's Constance got on a car. She did not notice which way she was going and she huddled down in a rear seat, to escape observation. No one paid any attention to her, and, by the time the car had traversed a few blocks she had regained her composure, at least outwardly.

Only then did she realize that she was going away from the address which she had started to seek in the afternoon, but she felt that she would be unable to do any conscientious work that day. Moreover, it was now five o'clock, as she could tell by the homeward bound office people, and she suddenly remembered that Mrs. Marshall left her office at five o'clock.

A happy thought came to her. She would go to her "first home" and see the little boy for whom she had been a transfer mother. It seemed, in fact, as if she had been bound in that direction, subconsciously, from the minute she escaped from that "pirate's den" in the rear of Tanti's.

This idea came to her as a complete relief, and she transferred to the new car which would take her to her destination, with a queer feeling that she was going *home*, really home, this time, where she could be a real mother. Not a transfer mother in a substitute home.

However, she was not to receive absolution so easily. There was a certain stiffness in the welcome of the woman who had the little boy, a Mrs. Judson, although she did ostensibly seem willing to let Constance see the child she had adopted. Constance had been there every day, now, for a week, and perhaps Mrs. Judson could not be blamed.

The boy was in the bow window overlooking a side street, which Mrs. Judson called her conservatory. Some ferns, a Chinese "holly-hock," a Jerusalem cherry tree, some pepper berries from California and several pots of mountain violets were arranged to form a cheerful bower. On the floor, below the flower ledges, sat the child, playing with a rubber ball.

With a gasp of delight, and a wince of pain, Constance saw this ball and the baby ineffectually striving to swallow it. Another afternoon, another ball, another child came poignantly to her memory, and her eyes filled with tears.

She reached down and picked up the boy, clasping him to her breast, passionately. He simply reached forth his tiny hand and grasped

the frill of her collar, and snuggled contentedly into her arms, while she petted and played with him.

Mrs. Judson looked on, her face grim. The child had not yet received *her* embraces so naturally.

"See!" exclaimed Constance, ecstatically. "He's so glad to see me."

"I see," said Mrs. Judson, unsmiling.

"He knows I've found him a good home, doesn't he?" laughed Constance, rubbing the tiny nose with her own, and not failing to perceive the cause of the coolness she had found in Mrs. Judson.

"He has taken a fancy to you," said Mrs. Judson, with mounting indignation. "Why didn't you keep him yourself?" Without another word she turned and left the two together.

Constance flinched, but affected not to notice the maternal jealousy, which might have been only maternal vanity had the "mother" been regarding her own child.

The baby was laughing and trying to pull the frill off. She disengaged his hand, gently. He began to cry. She gave him back the frill. "Who am I?" she asked.

A contented coo was the only answer.

"Who am I?"

A roguish smile came from the infant, as if he did not intend to show off his knowledge so

easily. He would demand longer attention. "Who am I?" she insisted.

"Con—Con—" he stuttered.

"Yes. Con—what?"

"Con—thanth!"

She hugged him tightly. "Yes, yes, you darling," she whispered. There was silence for awhile. Then he struggled away from her, seemingly troubled by some momentous question coming slowly to expression in his mind.

She held him at a distance and looked him over approvingly and lovingly. "Well," she asked, soberly, "what is it?"

"Ain't you—ain't you—my—my—"

"Your what, sweetheart?"

He struggled for the word a minute, then got it out, with tender infantile sweetness.

"Ain't you my muvver?"

She gasped and clutched him tightly to her breast, so tightly that he struggled as if hurt.

"Ain't you?" he demanded.

For a moment she could not answer. It seemed as though her heart would stop beating. Something wild and desperate inside of her was struggling to escape. She felt as though she had accomplished some terrible crime, but she could not tell how or what. These innocent child eyes were accusing her and she did not dare answer them.

"Ain't you?" he insisted, as though demand-

ing an explanation she had no right to withhold.

Not daring to look in his eyes she buried his head in her breast and murmured, into the back of his neck, kissing him behind the ears between the syllables;

"No. No. Sweetheart. You have no mother, and I have my own little baby, but I can't have him now—I can't have him—and I love you—I do love you. I love all babies. I do. Truly I do. And you have a good new mother now, and must love and be good to her, and—"

She broke down and sobbed, wilted away completely, and sat there for a long time, consumed with her own anguish.

When she next realized what she was doing the baby was looking at her with an absent curiosity in which there was just a trace of fear. At that moment Mrs. Judson came in. He saw her coming and reached toward her with appealing gestures, his baby fingers clawing the air, asking for aid. With the infallible instinct of a child he knew now where lay the unselfish interest concerning himself.

Mrs. Judson took him joyously and, for the first time, she smiled at Constance. "Perhaps I can tend to him now," she said, with a note of triumph.

"Yes. Yes," said Constance, wiping her eyes, and not deigning to explain. The pres-

ence of the other woman caused her curiously deep emotion to vanish utterly, apparently, though once she was alone again she was to know, too well, that it had not vanished.

"I must be going."

"Don't hurry," said Mrs. Judson, dryly.

But Constance was already at the front door, bidding a hasty good-by. As she left she snatched one last passionate kiss at the child, who looked at her in amazement, not alarmed, but only curious to know what made women cry. Before this enigma his tiny man-soul paused dumbfounded, slightly troubled, but chiefly curious to know if he had caused it.

Once on the street she hastened to her hotel. When she reached her room she threw herself on her bed and sobbed for hours.

She could no longer evade the truth. It had flashed in upon her through that baby's eyes, as no words of man or woman could have convinced her; as no lost illusions had convinced her; as no brutality of man had convinced; as no plea of husband or admonition of father could convince.

Her place was with her own child, and not out picking up vicarious and tardy homes for other children! Had she not her own fireside to watch, without bothering with other firesides, however grievously they might be tended? After all, her own child should have been her

first concern. How could she know that her own boy had anything even remotely resembling a mother's care, while she had tried, almost like a thief, to steal this new affection that had come happily to cheer a lonely woman's heart?

She began wondering if Kitty had properly prepared that new milk the doctor had ordered, if his little garments had been properly replenished and well mended where he was sure to tear them, if he slept without a pillow at night so his little backbone would grow straight; and a dozen other details occurred to her, with startling distinctness. She now realized, with a sick faintness, that these questions had really been knocking for an entrance to her head ever since she had left her home, but that she had resolutely denied them. She now reveled in them, as with a guilty joy.

She felt like a truant in throwing to the winds all that had seemed most dear. Of what possible importance now could a woman's vote be if Bobby had been permitted to contract some horrible disease? This thought gave her a fresh fear and she dwelt on it tenaciously. The fear supplanted the joy in forsaking that standard of "the enfranchisement of women" which she had so jubilantly espoused the day which now seemed ages ago.

She made up her mind that when morning

came she would go up, regardless of consequences, even if she did forfeit her rights—*what were woman's rights when a child's were at stake?*—and see Bobby. What if Arthur did find her there and misconstrue her coming as forgiveness for his terrible neglect and even that cruel blow he had struck her those ages gone!

But *had* Arthur struck the blow? No. It was that beast, Strange. He entered her mind, immediately to leave it. She shuddered. Nothing could better have shown her absorption in woman's primal instinct—the child—than the easy way in which she forgot what another type of woman would have dwelt on to the exclusion of all else; viz., that brutal assault of the afternoon.

Which shows that, after all, Constance was not so thoroughly civilized as she supposed. The veneer of artificial conditions had not yet prostituted her native instincts. She was still the tribal woman, the pioneer woman, the home woman, the true-mother type. Despite her brief adventure into the sophistries of the times she had not yet learned to substitute a toy dog or even the offspring of others for her own child. And she was not yet ready to substitute the bickerings of a bastard political creed for a man's honest love. Men were not yet to her mere "biological excrescences" or

children "the accidents that insure an ungrateful posterity."

However, when morning dawned her resolution dimmed. She lacked the courage to go home. She realized that it would take great strength now to do that, and she felt horribly, oppressively weak. So she dressed herself and went to the Home Finding Society's office.

Mrs. Marshall had not yet arrived. She made up her mind that she would confide in Mrs. Marshall and seek her advice. While waiting for her to come she read an enscribed poem hanging above the secretary's desk:

"Thus is a man created—to do all his work for some
woman,
Do it for her and her only, only to lay at her feet;
Yet in his talk to pretend, shyly and fiercely maintain it,
That all is for love of the work—toil just for love
of the toil.
Yet was there ever a battle, but side by side with
the soldiers,
Stern, like the serried corn, fluttered the souls of
the women,
As in and out through the corn go the blue-eyed
shapes of the flowers;
Yet was there ever a strength, but a woman's soft-
ness upheld it,
Never a Thebes of our dreams but it rose to the
music of women—

Iron and steel it might stand, but the women had breathed on the building:

Yea, no man shall make or unmake, ere some woman hath made him a man."

Mrs. Marshall entered while she was studying it.

"Are these your sentiments?" Constance asked.

"No," laughed Mrs. Marshall, cheerily. "If I could write like that I should not be tied down to the humdrum details of rescuing tiny souls. I should be occupied in inspiring the many."

"Then you don't agree with this?" Constance pursued, perplexed.

"A woman's modesty should prevent her from accepting openly so great a tribute. The man who wrote that was a genius with a wonderful insight into the truths of life."

"But do you think women are so important to men as this makes them out?"

Mrs. Marshall was quite serious now. "They ought to be, even when they are not," she answered.

"But *are* they?"

"Some are."

"Then," exclaimed Constance, "why shouldn't they vote?"

Mrs. Marshall, having opened her desk,

turned on her new assistant with a bland patience. "My child," she said, "do you think the man who wrote that poem had any *low* conception of women?"

"Certainly not."

"Then he would not have asked them to vote."

"But, if they demanded it?"

"They would no longer be the women he wrote about."

"What would he have said then?"

"He would have tried to help them by keeping the ballot from them, and thus forcing them to see the truth."

"Hum!" This was not the conversation Constance had intended to bring up, and she saw no way to introduce the subject of her own woes. So she went to work over some papers, hoping the chance would come soon. Lacking the initiative to do, alone, what she knew she ought to do, she instinctively looked to this strong, kindly woman to advise her to do the thing she wanted most to do.

But she started a long way from her subject, when she asked, later in the forenoon:

"What Anti society is it you belong to, Mrs. Marshall?"

"It is not exactly an 'anti' society, as you call it, though none of the members believe in woman suffrage."

"What *do* you call it?"

"The Current Events League."

"What a curious name."

"We meet once a week to discuss civic affairs. At each meeting we take up some current topic of interest. For instance, this week we are discussing the new plan of commission government of cities. Next week we—"

"But that's voting, isn't it—or—suffrage?" Constance uttered the word, tentatively, not quite sure even yet exactly what "suffrage" means.

Mrs. Marshall smiled indulgently. "It is a problem which male suffrage has to settle, but we believe women should be thoroughly informed on all these things. It is the 'antis,' as you call them, who study legislation. The suffragists consider that beneath their notice. All they claim to care for is the vote."

"But why want to know about legislation if you don't care to vote?" persisted Constance.

"There are several reasons, but the best is the same reason that keeps a general away from the firing line whenever there is a battle. He doesn't stay away because he is afraid, or because the soldiers won't let him there, or because he lacks the proper arms to fight with. He stays away for one purpose only—that he may get the proper vision. His *vision* is often worth a whole army of brawn. Many a time

an inferior army with a great general has beaten a superior army with a poor general. *Vision* is the great thing in every battle of life, and vision is had only with perspective. If you get down into the thick of the fight you lose your vision; you cease being a commander and become a common soldier; you trade your divine brain for inferior brawn; you divorce your heavenly instinct that you may mate with an earthly ballot. You cease being a woman and become only half a man."

"Oh!" cried Constance. "How you put things!"

"You have heard it said that every great man has much of the woman in him. That is only another way of saying that he was extremely sensitive to all conditions, and that he had, above all else, a great vision. Perspective makes greatness, and every woman has a chance to get it; is better fitted by nature to have it than a man. They are the generals directing the forces of the armies of mankind. Oh! What terrible blindness can be on the women to-day when they are willing—nay, anxious to throw away these God-given attributes for stupid and vain 'rights'!"

"But if men are cruel—" Constance thought she could lead up to her subject now, for she was ripe to confess.

"To fight with a man is to lose the fight,"

said Mrs. Marshall, as if she had not been interrupted, "unless you fight unfairly. You can win, fairly, only by appeal, either to his reason or his love. If he is hopelessly cruel run away, though I think there are fewer men who answer that description to-day than some women would like to make out. I never *knew* a cruel man in my life, though I have *heard* of plenty.

"A man's reason is his strength; his love his weakness. Grapple with one; shield the other. Talk of the 'right' to vote! The right to hold a man's love is the greatest right a woman possesses. From that comes a woman's right to children, which I am inclined to place second to her right to a man's love, for a child is only the fruit of love—or should be."

"But," faltered Constance, wanting desperately to speak of herself, and yet grateful that Mrs. Marshall's eloquence apparently knew no bounds. "But—suppose the man opposes you?" The talk was of "man" now, not "men."

"Nature never intended we should oppose men," answered the gray-haired, benevolent woman. "We lose the battle before we begin it. Women will never vote by *forcing* it from men. They will only succeed in that by *cajoling* them. If men ever do give the ballot to women it will be for the same reason that Samson permitted his locks to be shorn—because a

woman will be able to plead successfully that hair is more beautiful off the human head than it is on."

Constance was anxious to get the talk back from "men" to "man," for she was not so vitally concerned in suffrage as she sometimes imagined. So she said: "But suppose he ignores you?"

Mrs. Marshall was now reading some papers on her desk, but she looked up with a final admonition. She laughed and replied: "That is a woman's best 'right'—to *force* a man to give her attention. That sort of force is quite justified."

Constance subsided now. She felt that she had been answered, without a confession. But, how to exert her force—that was the question.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LAST STAND

HAD fortune not favored her a few days later Constance might have been obliged to go back home even though it were not the "home" she had left in the most banal fashion; perhaps to have slunk in with bowed head, like any whipped and beaten recruit deserting abjectly from the new army of freedom.

But she was to be spared mediocrity. The thrust and tilt of adventure was to favor her to the very end of her quixotic tryst with the bauble. She was to be permitted to return, conquered, but not defeated; bravely, "like a lady," the victor through the strength of her weakness.

Yet she was constantly on the verge of going up to the twelfth floor apartment, only a mile away from her in that canyoned city. She felt towards that home as she had always felt on a height when looking at the ground. An impulse to leap was upon her irresistably and she never could tell why she did not leap. Why she compared her home to the death that would await her if she dashed herself on the ground

she did not know, but, vaguely, she felt that if she went back now she would be broken forever; her pride would be snapped and she would never again be able to face anything in this world. While the accumulation of her experiences, coupled with all that Mrs. Marshall frequently said to her, usually by innuendo, but frequently so directly that she was sure the kindly woman *must* know her story, forced her to recognize that the *right* thing for her to do was to go home; yet a dogged, insuperable something down deep within compelled her to struggle on, desperately, hoping against hope that she would not have to humble herself.

That she herself had erected the barriers that kept her from the home she now longed for, dumbly but desperately, made them none the less difficult to surmount; in fact, that made them the more difficult.

She recalled every step of her progress into this new life. She remembered how jauntily she had left her home that morning when Arthur had failed to kiss her good-by, had failed to telephone, thus refusing to admit that he had wronged her the night before, and, with intense self-castigation, she reflected how easy it would have been to have gone back that first night. Alas! Every day that she had stayed away since had made her return more difficult.

A flight begun in jauntiness had ended in de-

spair. A revolt that had begun with impulsive resentment had ended in implacable rebellion. What had appeared a semi-comic quarrel between husband and wife had ended in a tragedy. For she did not doubt that her case was tragic. Much as she blamed herself she pitied herself more, and something was yet required besides the severe knocks she had already had to make her entirely humble.

For, while she had been disillusionized regarding the object of her search for freedom she was not yet entirely sure that freedom did not await her somewhere. For that will-of-the-wisp she was still groping, and, in her futile determination to find it, she clung tenaciously to the opportunity presented in the Home Finding Society.

Her work was done so carefully that Mrs. Marshall could not help showing her gratification. One morning she said:

"My dear, do you know that your two weeks of probation will be up to-morrow?"

"Yes," said Constance, weakly, fearful that she had failed.

"Tell me, do you think you want to go on with the work?"

There could be no mistaking Constance's tone as she answered: "Oh! Mrs. Marshall, you know I do. You must see that. It seems to me that I have found my life work. Have I—

have I altogether failed?" Her lip drooped pitifully.

"No, dear," said Mrs. Marshall, with motherly tenderness. "I only fear you have worked too hard. You look dreadfully worn out. Perhaps you need a little rest—say a few days."

Constance was frightened. Was this a tactful dismissal? "No!" she exclaimed. "I am not a *bit* tired. But I don't sleep well lately. Perhaps it is only the warm weather. Yes, I am sure that is it—the weather."

"You must take things more easily," admonished the secretary.

"But," questioned Constance, "what are you going to say to the committee—I mean about me?" She looked appealingly at Mrs. Marshall, who rose and placed an arm about her, affectionately.

"I am going to recommend," said the secretary, "that you be permanently employed."

"Oh!" sighed Constance, with vast relief. "I don't know how to thank you."

"You needn't. I am not doing this as a favor to you, but because I think it is for the good of the society."

Constance sat down and looked out of the window, while Mrs. Marshall returned, tactfully, to her work. For the moment the joy of successful accomplishment lay deliciously upon

Constance. Had she not, at last, come into her own? Had not this anodyne of grateful work, successfully done, salved her wounds? She had traveled a devious path to find what she had to do in the world, but that had only made this haven the more welcome and its shade the more restful now that it was found.

Then, as she looked out of the window into the bustling street, there came over her a vision of the children she had helped. She saw her "first home" through a mist of happy tears, and her "second home" which she had found only the day before, and the third for which she was even then searching, and her breast swelled with pride. Well, this was not the sort of pride she would have had if she could have appeared on that public platform with the illustrious Mrs. Leicester. Nor was it the sort of pride she had so fiendishly craved that day when she first heard Ruth Vance speak. Yet it was a more grateful pride than either of those emotions could have been. She could look any one in the face now. No. Her spirit was not broken; chastened, perhaps, but not even bent. She had demonstrated her "rights" as an individual. She could look after herself, and, in looking after herself, she was helping others. A sense of deep gratitude possessed her in the knowledge that she was fighting nothing now; she was tearing nothing

down; she was opposing nothing; she was only building up; with tender hands healing the wounds torn in the very breast of society. This new consciousness began to invest her with a new look, the first budding forth of that look of maternal splendor which cast such a halo of gracious dignity around Mrs. Marshall.

Then, suddenly, like an Indian upon its prey, came a wandering thought instantly shattering her beautiful house of gratified pride. It was a vision of her own child, *her* Bobby, and to this thought responded the woman in her, far below pride or consciousness, down in her very marrow, slumbering as the oak slumbers in the acorn.

The shaft was as if fatal. Her head fell on her breast and she sobbed, gently, with no attempt to assuage it, the tears welling up easily as from a bottomless well. Before she knew it Mrs. Marshall was beside her, with a comforting arm about her, the words that sometimes poured from her as from an orator not forthcoming, but in their place a silence that encompassed understanding.

Finally she spoke, very simply, saying: "Yes, dear," as if she knew all about it.

Slowly the tears ceased. Constance was about to sob, "I was thinking of my baby—my *own* baby!" Instead, she looked through her tears, with a smile, and said:

"I am so happy, Mrs. Marshall, that I can stay on here with you."

"Yes, dear. So am I."

Constance stood up and the frayed nerves gave way. She threw herself in Mrs. Marshall's arms, hugging her warmly. "You are so good—so good to me. I'd work my fingers off for you. I feel that you are almost like my mother. You tell me what is for my own very best good. I'd *die* if I couldn't stay on here, with you."

"Don't worry, dear. We shall do good work together, you and I. By the way—" She stepped to her desk, while Constance dried her eyes, feeling that now, when she had had a good cry, she could go on with what was necessary. "I think I have something here for you that will be just the thing for that little change you need."

"Yes," assented Constance, unprepared for what was to come.

"It's a trip out of the city."

"Oh!" The exclamation was not all of joy.

"Here's an application from a banker's wife. She wants a girl, less than a year old, native born, of established good parentage, but an orphan. That is a difficult order to fill, but I think we have just the girl down on Pine Street. Now the only thing to be sure of is the woman who applies. I feel sure she is all right, but I

want you to go up there and see for yourself. Stay a day or two and inquire about her around the town. You needn't hurry. Stay four or five days, if you wish. Perhaps the woman will come back with you and see the child. If not, you may have to take the child to her. In any event, go up and get acquainted."

Constance was already alarmed. "What place is it?" she asked.

"Tioga Falls."

"Tioga Falls!" There was a note of terror in this cry.

"Yes. Have you ever been there? It's a dear, sleepy old town, with a lot of fine, old people who will never know that the most important town in the state is not Tioga Falls."

Constance felt faint. "My father lives there," she said, simply. "I was born there and brought up there!"

"Why, how fortunate!" exclaimed Mrs. Marshall. "It is a luckier chance than I expected. You can take a trip home now directly in the line of duty."

Constance did not want her new and wonderful friend to know *anything* now and so, with an effort, she concealed her perturbation. "It is very kind of you," she said, "to trust me with this commission. I am so new to the work. Don't you think one of the other agents might do it better?"

To Mrs. Marshall this seemed a becoming modesty and she hastened to reassure her new assistant. But now another fear was on Constance.

"What's the name of the applicant—the banker's wife?" she asked.

Mrs. Marshall looked at the letter before her. "Mrs. Watkins," she said, "Mrs. Samuel M. Watkins. Do you know her?"

"She is one of our closest neighbors."

"Well, this is a coincidence—lucky for the society, lucky for you. You can start Monday, and you need not hurry back. Stay a week, if you wish. And, this afternoon, you had better go down to Pine street and see the child, so you can take a personal report to Mrs. Watkins. It is this personal element that counts, you know. I might do all of this business by writing if anything else than the souls of little children were in the bargain."

"Very well," said Constance, bewildered, unhappy, her quiet pride and her vague despair equally dissipated.

However, as the afternoon passed, while she was on her way to the Pine street orphanage, a dogged determination asserted itself, and the fatalistic philosophy which had always governed her had an opportunity to place the situation in a becoming light. Perhaps, after all, this was for the best.

At first, it seemed as if she never would have the heart to face her father. She could not confess her failure in marriage, and she dreaded what he would say to her; not that she feared he would be harsh, for his silence would be more terrible than harshness. Of course she could go to him now with this vindication of a respectable and worthy occupation, but, even that, she feared, would not be sufficient to overcome his old-fashioned ideas. She well knew what he thought of women who, as he had stated it more than once, "jumped into men's work like cows into a harness—never able to pull a decent load and ruined forever for good milk."

Yet—and this thought fanned her courage—she would have to face him some time, and she would never be more favorably equipped for the struggle she knew she must have with him eventually. Yes. It was the brave thing to have it out now. After all, he *might* understand. He *was* a very wonderful man, to be sure.

Thus self-encouraged she hastened through her errand at the orphanage so that she might get back uptown before the shops were closed and make some minor purchases to assist her in making a good appearance when she returned to Tioga Falls. Of course, she could not be as completely feminine as she would desire, but

she could at least be neat, clean and whole. That would, perhaps, be a more becoming appearance to make, anyway; more in keeping with her new dignity of work and sorrow.

Consumed with these thoughts and impatient to get back uptown she was much annoyed to find the car she was on stalled. Looking out, after a minute's rest, she saw an endless line of cars far up the street, and the motorman told her there had been an accident and they might be delayed on that street for half an hour.

So she started to walk over to Broadway, not knowing just how far the distance might be. A block ahead of her she saw Stuyvesant Square and headed in that direction, for it was always pleasanter in the parks downtown than in the congested streets. As she hurried through the square she came to a crowd gathered around someone talking. She was annoyed to find her way blocked again, and was pushing around the edges of the crowd, along the grass, when something in the harried voice of the speaker arrested her.

At the same moment rough, loud voices came from the crowd and the shrill cry of the speaker rang out above them. Now she recognized the voice. It was that of the little Jewish girl who had been kind to her when she was living with Ruth Vance, who had told her that she could do

all that Ruth did, and more. The girl had been, on that occasion, perhaps forward, even "vulgar," but she had evidently been kindly.

She was making a suffrage speech and the crowd was heckling her. The heckling had evidently been good-natured at first, but the girl had not taken it in the best of part, and now there were sharp jesting phrases floating through the spring air. "Go home, and tend the baby!" came from one side the crowd, and a cheap laughter followed it. "Why don't you drive a truck!" "Hire a hall!" floated in on her, and, as each cry came, others followed more rapidly, until, in the commotion, what the speaker had to say could not be heard at all.

Constance, by this time, had wormed her way in, close up to the soap box on which the girl was standing. She was highly indignant at the crowd and all her sympathies rushed to the girl. The merits of the controversy concerned her not at all. Suffrage was of no concern to her any more. Her heart alone was enlisted, and she felt, as a part of her new courageous determination to face all her troubles squarely, that she could meet this rough element right now and here and tame it. The slow fighting blood that was ready in her only for a final defense, and never to attack, was now being aroused.

Finally, one of the hoodlums nearest the stand, uttered some phrase which could be

heard only by the speaker, who turned on him, like a catamount, snatching his hat from his head, and shrieking; "You filthy cur! I'll box your ears!" which she thereupon proceeded to do. Most of the crowd laughed at this, but the cries of imprecation against the speaker mounted rapidly, and, as the girl ceased her attentions to her tormentor, she saw Constance.

"Mrs. Rudd!" she shrieked. "Mrs. Rudd. Come up and tell these lowlifes what you think of them!" Memory of Constance's effectiveness with the police had evidently caused her to hail her old protector with delight.

Constance felt herself prompted by a great elation such as had seized her that day she had attended a meeting with Miss Rivers, and she quickly measured the crowd with her eye. There were not more than thirty people in it, and she felt equal to them. Moreover she had a sly determination to test her efficiency as a speaker, and secure in the belief that no one she knew would hear her, except this ignorant girl, about whom she cared little, she permitted her indignation to spur her ambition to the test.

"Very well," she called, "let me up!"

"Hooray!" shouted the girl, and jumped down from the soap box, followed by jeers and taunts.

Constance mounted it and looked over the crowd, which quieted for a moment, to make up

its collective mind how it should treat this new phenomenon. Most of them seemed pleased with the novelty of such a speaker in Stuyvesant Square at that time of day, and settled back, quietly, to enjoy what she had to say.

Constance never could remember what her speech was about. She had intended to berate them with scorn and indignation for so abusing a woman when they would not have dared to attack a man. But, whether she did this, or talked of babies, she never knew.

Soon she was conscious of a new figure in the crowd. Perhaps he had been there all the time, for she did not see him approach. At any rate he loomed above the heads of the others, a gaunt, blonde person, with yellow lashes and dully gleaming eyes, while on his cheeks showed three freshly healed long scratches.

She felt sick at this apparition of Strange, but ignored him and continued her harangue, striving to appear oblivious of his presence. He waited to see if she would notice him, edging nearer all the while, and treated quite respectfully by the crowd. She hastened now, to complete what she was saying, while the girl crouched at the foot of the box.

"Are we dogs that we let this upper tenner come down here and talk to us!" The sentence boomed out from a deep base voice, and Constance, blanched white now with fear and rage,

looked down to see Strange with his back half turned to her, contemptuously, and addressing the crowd, which was paying him respectful attention.

She stopped in the midst of a sentence, as if paralyzed, and Strange began addressing the motley audience, in which there was much quiet muttering. Sick now, with disgust at herself that she had been led again into such a distressing position, Constance was about to jump from the box and make her way out of the crowd and back to her hotel, when another figure she had not previously observed edged up on Strange from the side.

She stood stock still on the box and gasped. The newcomer was Arthur!

She remained, as if in a dream, up above the crowd and oblivious of them, as if they did not exist, while she was conscious only of the two men who now faced each other below her. Arthur stepped up to Strange and tapped him, sharply, on the elbow which he was waving over the heads of the audience. Strange looked down, but did not stop his talk or his gestures.

"Get out of here!" said Arthur.

The crowd grinned and held a curious silence, edging in closer around the two men and leaving Constance alone on the box.

"Who t'hell are you?" sneered the blonde.

"Move on!" said Arthur quietly, looking at

his antagonist with a cool glance which began at his neck and traveled up and down the torso, impartially, to the waist, as a wrestler measures his opponent before the clench. Strange stood at least four inches taller than the newcomer, whom he looked over superciliously, without fear, saying:

"You looking for trouble with me, stranger?"

"Not *looking*! I've found it. Get out of here and leave these women alone!" Arthur's hands clenched, slowly, deliciously, as a cat draws up her claws, and he stood on the balls of his feet.

"*You* can't make me! Look here—who are you, anyway?"

"I'm the fellow who told you to move on—that's all!"

"By what right?"

"Because you're a boor, and don't belong in a public park."

"Why, you insignificant snipe!" shouted Strange, "You turtle-bellied crawfish. Get away from here or I'll smear your face on your heels!" And he made a lunge at Arthur.

But the smaller man was not in the same place at the beginning and at the end of the lunge. Instead, he was close in under Strange's arms, which were half again as long as his, and had landed a terrific blow square in the pit of the big man's stomach, following which he brought

a vicious uppercut to his chin. Strange grunted and dropped back, whereupon Arthur leaped him, with savage fury, flailing away with both hands. In an instant Strange was wallowing on the ground.

Arthur stepped back. "Get up!" he cried, sternly, and Strange lumbered to his feet and strove to clench the wiry, smaller man. But there was no holding Arthur. His bare knuckles flew in and out, landing on the loose face of the yellow haired giant like the steel kickers in a rock crusher. The face that had been opened by the wife was now torn and gashed by the husband.

Again Strange slipped to the ground, exhausted, his courage, which lasted only while things were coming his way, gone. "Get up!" cried Arthur, sternly, and he obeyed, almost mechanically. Again Arthur pummeled him, while he stood, with scant show of resistance, his hands limp by his sides, his knees wobbling, a half-unconscious dazed look in his eyes.

Finally, with the precision of a matador giving the coup de grace to a tortured bull, Arthur drew back with his right hand and sent in one resounding blow to the point of the chin, whereupon the yellow-haired heckler subsided to the ground like a wilting leaf, and lay there, oblivious to the world.

At this juncture Constance fainted.

CHAPTER XXIV

MORE LIGHT

WHEN she came to she was in a cab, snuggled up against him, with his arm about her, and her head on his shoulder. Still she felt very far from him and she snuggled closer. The arm did not seem to tighten. She felt cold all over, for her intuition seemed to tell her that he did not love her. He had picked her up in pity, not in love.

She reached for his free hand and clasped it warmly. He responded with a pressure that seemed to her inadequate. There was nothing but mild concern, common charity in this pressure, this embrace. For weeks and weeks she had looked forward to this moment, and she had always pictured that he would take her passionately in his arms, smother her with kisses, implore her pardon, and vow never to leave her side again; whereupon she had expected to graciously forgive him and, perhaps, to weep a little and to kiss him tenderly.

So, as she lay there, weak, in the hollow of his arm, a wave of resentment surged over her

as she reflected that he was only protecting a frail woman, after all. Instead of the magnanimity that she had expected to be able to show she could only lie there limp and accept his questionable attention.

Thus rebellion was still struggling for life in her heart, and she cast about for some way to express it, for she lacked the strength to leave his embrace, and it was very comfortable where she lay, anyway. Finally the words came to her and she spoke:

“Why did you let me go?”

“I don’t know.”

That was all that either of them said while they were in the cab. But it was enough to reassure her, and to cause her to lie contentedly until he made some move, and to strike down the rising tide of resentment. *For she had assumed that it was his fault that she had gone and he had accepted the assumption.*

And, was that not all that she wanted! It was not a very definite statement, to be sure, but it was quite definite enough to satisfy her for the moment. A volume might have said less.

As for him, he had many times pictured to himself what he would say when they met again. He had expected to reason with her, quietly, but sternly; to ask her why she had not talked their troubles out with him logically and

frankly before she took so drastic an action; to try and show her by force of reason and persuasive love that she had done a very foolish thing; that she had been cruel to him; that she had neglected her child; that she had been unjust to herself; above all, he had meant to show her very plainly the folly of seizing on the suffrage question as an excuse for leaving him, to sound her and to find out if she still loved him, and, if he determined eventually that she did no longer love him, to offer her her freedom in a reasonable and manly way.

But all he said was, "I don't know," and he sat there, in a poised delight, his senses lulled by having her back again in his arms. He reviewed all that he had intended to say, and dismissed each point, one by one, as would a lawyer discussing a case. Finally he concluded that "I don't know" was all he could say; that, so far as speech was concerned, it was final. So he said nothing more.

The important thing really was that she was again in his arms. Nothing else mattered, except the sense of satisfaction he experienced in reflecting that he had soundly thrashed someone. Why he had thrashed the man didn't matter so much as did the fact that he *had* thrashed him. Thus he had delivered from his system the fight that had been spoiling there for weeks.

When they reached the apartment house they

got out of the cab; he paid the chauffeur; and they went up in the elevator to their apartment like any respectable young married couple who had just come in from a ride in the park. She looked worn and tired and perhaps frayed, and he seemed somewhat bent with worry, but a casual observer might not have noted it.

He opened the door for her and she passed into her bedroom where she dropped her hat and coat and then rushed for the nursery. He did not follow her, noting, with a pathetic droop in his mouth, that she had apparently little interest in him. He went to the dining-room window and looked out, with a dull blackness of soul worse than any he had experienced since she had left. He would be alone now, forevermore, he felt; he would look after them, of course, and be as kind and as gentle as possible, but the old love that had made everything worth while was gone—gone forever!

Finally he went into the nursery and found them together on the floor, Constance weeping and the baby fingering at the frill of her collar. She looked up, happy through her tears, and said:

“Hasn’t he grown a lot?”

“I hadn’t noticed it,” said Arthur, unmindful of the child, sick at heart, black with misery.

They became oblivious of him again and he

felt out of place, so he turned to go. Then a sense of biting injustice, of terrible wrong came upon him. He thought of how this woman had deserted him, without warning, without explanation, leaving all her sacred obligations, her child, her altar vow. He thought of how he had suffered, and he forgot to wonder what had happened to her while she had been out struggling pitifully against the world. Still he held his resolve to be generous, though he could not demean himself to beg for one of those kisses with which she seemed so prodigal there on the floor, over that infant, whom he almost hated.

Finally he said, looking down at them: "I am glad you have come back. I hoped you wouldn't refuse my terms."

She thought he was exulting over her, but she was too happy to protest. She only said: "There are no terms, Arthur. I only want my boy—my *own* boy. I'm a destitute mother and I need a home." Then she buried her face in the baby's neck.

He walked from the room in a swirl of misery. He passed into the bedroom and sank upon their bed. Life seemed over for him. He knew he would go on and on, doing his work, living, somehow performing his part, but it would all be different; there would be no joy in life any more.

Then, to his own surprise, he began to speculate on how he might win her back. The chance was here. Could he not begin on this suffrage business? She wanted it. Let her have it. It was nothing vital. If it was a whim indulge her; women were only children, anyway. Why not let her have her suffrage notions, if she wanted them, as he might have made no objection to some ribbon she placed on her dress, though he abhorred ribbons, *per se*? Yes, that would be the best way to begin a reconciliation;—announce to her his conversion to “the cause.”

But he began to weep, for the first time in his life. Silently, the hot, bitter tears rained down on his pillow. He was weeping, not at his utter loneliness and his bitter failure in love, but at his revealed cowardice. Only cowardice could have made him thus desert what he firmly believed was right. Once he had seen a prize-fighter, a champion who had never been defeated before knocked out in the ring; when he came to consciousness and found that he had lost and that the crowd were yelling that he had quit he burst into tears. Arthur felt like this now, as he lay there, knowing nothing but his own misery.

After a very long time a soothing arm stole around his neck and a gentle hand touched his wet cheeks. Then swimming eyes looked into

his and he felt his head drawn down onto her breast even as had been the baby's. Silently they sat there for long, he sobbing in her arms, without shame, she comforting him with soothing caresses.

Then she drew him up and now all of his strength came back and all that she had dreamed of and longed for came to her—he kissed her passionately. He embraced her as though with a despairing intensity, until she cried:

"Oh! Arthur, you hurt me!"

"Do I?" he cried, releasing her, suddenly fearful that he had wrongly interpreted her mood.

"Not *really!*" she answered and snuggled back into his arms.

"I wouldn't hurt you for the world," he said. "I'd do anything for you. I'd even agree with you."

They both smiled at this. "You'd better not," she admonished, roguishly, shaking her finger, "I love you because I can't convert you."

"Don't speak of it. I don't care if women vote."

"Ssh!" She clapped her hand over his mouth, "You must not say that! I've been too wicked a woman if I've brought you to that."

He looked at her in amazement, unable to

comprehend what she meant. "I don't understand," he said.

"Don't try to," she answered, "You're better because you don't understand," and she began treating him like a child again, caressing his face, kissing his eyes and hair. Finally she took his face between her two hands and patted it.

"How thin you are!" she murmured, and felt assailed by terrible castigations for her neglect. Again she looked at him, solicitously, with eyes wide with wonder, as if she were seeing him for the first time.

"I'll never understand you, either," she whispered in his ear.

"How silly! I'm a perfectly obvious ordinary man."

"No! No!" sighed Constance, "You're just a little baby, and yet—" she shuddered, looking at him, with the holy awe of a maiden for a conqueror, "you can strike down a great beast of a man so much bigger than yourself!"

Now she resolved never to tell him what had happened to her that afternoon in Tanti's. He had avenged her and it was enough for *her* to know. She would never tell him, but at the same time, nothing could ever come between them again. He possessed her now, by every right, ancient and modern.

Yet, feeling as she did, she struggled away

from him, and he looked at her, with a grave concern, not yet quick enough to follow her coquetry. "I shouldn't let you touch me," she said.

"You're right," he said, seriously.

"Oh! Silly!" she exclaimed, leaping into his arms, "That's the whole trouble with you. You don't understand how to make love any more than a peanut. Why didn't you run after me that night? Why didn't you come after me the next day? Why haven't you been after me every day since? Why—why—why? I demand to know why, sir!"

"I thought—I thought—" he began.

"Don't!" she cried, "That's the trouble. You think too much. You don't love enough. You stand up so straight and solemn and just. If you hadn't cried just now I never would have given in—" She saw the quick trouble in his face, and couldn't bear to tease him too much—not just then—"Oh! Yes, I would!" she cried, "I'd have crawled on my eyelashes to you after the way you beat up that awful man!"

* * * * *

That evening she wrote her father.

"DEAR DADDY;" (she said). "You asked me some time ago if I had joined a woman suffrage society. I did join, but I don't belong now. I've concluded I wasn't made for that sort of thing, but I must write

and answer your letter. Also another letter you wrote to a woman here, which she showed me, in which you said you would vote for suffrage as soon as some woman member of your family asked for it.

"This surprised me, Father, and I want to ask you, squarely; do you think this right? Would you decide a big public question on what might be just the temporary notion of one of your daughters?

"You would not decide any important family matter that way; anything of vital concern to *all* the family. I know you too well to believe that. You would just go off, alone, and *think* it out, and when you had once thought out what you felt was right, all Hades wouldn't budge you, as Jim used to say; and please pardon the language, but I'm married now. And don't you think you owe just as big a duty to the state as to your family? In fact, you're one of the 'fathers of the state,' aren't you? I read an editorial in one of the papers the other day which called you that.

"Probably you didn't mean what you said when you wrote the woman here who wanted her bill to go through. Probably you felt sure of your daughters. Dad, you can't ever be sure of any woman when she gets loose in these new ideas. They have a queer sort of fascination for her; it doesn't last, but it works the mischief while it lasts. She means well, but she hasn't the balance she has on some other things she is told more about when she is young—by her mother.

"I write you this way because it is hard to answer your questions directly. For awhile I thought I did believe in suffrage because my sympathy for women

was appealed to and I began to forget their privileges and to think of what they are deceived into thinking are their 'rights.' To-day I am not thinking of *my* rights but of my *child's*, and I feel that my influence through him and through my husband can do more for the state than the casting of any vote for any law.

"If I can make my child as high principled and as characterful as his father and his grandfather I shall be willing to trust all the laws of the country to him and to my husband and to you, and I'll feel that all women will get justice—and more. I owe it to my child to try, and to the country too. I can't help thinking, Dad, that your mother didn't make you the man you are by voting, nor did Arthur's mother make him what he is by trying to vote.

"That's all for this time, except one thing more: I admire you and respect you and *love* you more now, Dad, than I ever did before in my whole life, because I *know* better what a real *man* is, and I am perfectly contented to have you and Arthur go on voting for me forever and ever just as you have in the past.

"Because I love Arthur, too—Oh! so much! I mustn't tell about that, for my honeymoon is over, but I do—really!

"Here are a few million kisses, from your loving daughter,

"CONSTANCE."

"P. S.—I expected to make a trip to see you next week, but I have decided to wait awhile—until summer time."

When she had finished it she handed the let-

ter to Arthur to read and then sat down to write a note to Mrs. Marshall saying she would not like to have her name presented to the committee for the permanent position as an agent for the Home Finding Society.

"I'll come in some afternoon very soon and tell you all about it—why and everything—dear, *dear* Mrs. Marshall," she concluded.

Then she heard the baby crying and went in to see what she could do for him. It was the same old trouble;—the rubber ball was too big to swallow and too hard to chew. He compromised on her forefinger.

Arthur found her with the baby after he had read her letter to her father. They sat together in the window seat, the baby between them, each silent, and both satisfied that they had *never* been so happy as *this*.

Finally, with a deep sigh, she clasped the baby closely to her and spoke tenderly into his little ear, which at that moment lay within a hand's breadth of his father's.

"Oh! Robert!" she said ecstatically, in happy content, "I want you to grow up and be just like your father!" She looked in her husband's eyes, roguishly, and added:

"With all his mean, manly ways!"

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